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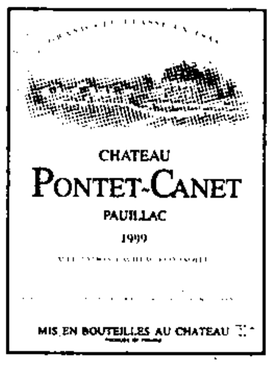

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Ch. La Pointe
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Brane-Cantenac	162
Issan	123
❤ **Giscours**	**144**
Cantenac-Brown	129
Palmer	462
Prieuré-Lichine	150
Tertre	117
❤ **La Tour de Mons**	**102**
Pavillon Rouge	177
Saint-Julien	
Léoville Poyferré	180
Léoville-Barton	234
Gruaud Larose	207
Ducru-Beaucaillou	297
Lagrange	159
Saint-Pierre	162
Talbot	156
Branaire-Ducru	144
❤ **Beychevelle**	**165**
❤ **Gloria**	**138**
Les Fiefs de Lagrange	90
Pauillac	
Pichon Baron	222
Duhart-Milon-Rothschild	138
Pontet-Canet	162
❤ **Haut-Batailley**	**138**

CHÂTEAUX	£ per 12 bottle case in bond ex VAT
Grand-Puy Ducasse	123
Grand-Puy-Lacoste	189
❤ **Lynch-Bages**	**240**
Lynch-Moussas	111
Armailhac	126
Haut-Bages Libéral	114
Clerc Milon	183
❤ **La Fleur Peyrabon**	**96**
Pibran	111
Carruades de Lafite	165
Les Forts de Latour	213
Les Tourelles de Longueville	111
Haut-Bages Averous	111
Saint-Estèphe	
Cos d'Estournel	273
Montrose	216
Calon Ségur	162
Lafon-Rochet	120
Le Boscq	111
❤ **Haut-Marbuzet**	**171**
Les Ormes de Pez	114
Tronquoy-Lalande	78
❤ **Bel Air**	**75**
Les Pagodes de Cos	120
Haut-Médoc	
La Lagune	126
Cantemerle	120
Belgrave	114

CHÂTEAUX	£ per 12 bottle case in bond ex VAT
Citran	84
❤ **Hourtin-Ducasse**	**57**
Lanessan	87
❤ **Peyrabon**	**69**
Sénéjac	69
❤ **Sociando-Mallet**	**171**
Médoc, Moulis, Listrac	
Loudenne	69
Chasse-Spleen	114
Poujeaux	126
Fourcas-Hosten	63
Pomerol	
Le Bon Pasteur	285
Clinet	465
La Conseillante	489
L'Evangile	738
Franc Maillet	111
Gazin	324
Guillot	120
Mazeyres	102
Petit Village	285
La Pointe	126
Clos René	114
❤ **Sales**	**114**
Vieux Château Certan *(per 6 bottles)*	261
Vieux Maillet	120
Le Jardin de Petit Village	120
La Fugue de Nenin	135

CHÂTEAUX	£ per 12 bottle case in bond ex VAT
Saint-Emilion	
Canon	273
Figeac	363
Clos Fourtet	252
La Gaffelière	252
L'Arrosée	234
Canon La Gaffelière	309
La Couspaude	267
La Dominique	234
Larmande	153
Pavie Macquin	354
Soutard	135
Troplong Mondot	273
Cros-Figeac	138
Faugères	114
Fombrauge	102
❤ **Grand Corbin Despagne**	**111**
Péby Faugères	234
❤ **Puy Mouton**	**93**
Sanctus	228
Le Petit Cheval	234
Virginie de Valandraud	234
Graves Pessac-Léognan, red	
La Mission Haut-Brion	489
La Tour Haut-Brion	201
❤ **Carbonnieux**	**135**
Domaine de Chevalier	189
Haut-Bailly	189

CHÂTEAUX	£ per 12 bottle case in bond ex VAT
❤ **Latour-Martillac**	**120**
Malartic-Lagravière	126
Pape Clément	252
Smith Haut Lafitte	189
Picque Caillou	81
Domaine de la Solitude	69
Graves Pessac-Léognan, white	
Haut-Brion *(per 6 bottles)*	391,50
Laville Haut-Brion	387
Domaine de Chevalier	285
Latour-Martillac	117
Malartic-Lagravière	147
Pape Clément *(per 6 bottles)*	154,50
Smith Haut Lafitte	189
Domaine de la Solitude	69
Sauternes	
Rayne Vigneau	138
Suduiraut	183
Coutet	183
Climens	234
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Rieussec	183
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Gnome

THE press hysteria surrounding my tax bill is an affront both to personal liberty and the British constitution. As is well known, I paid a total of 5p income tax for the financial year 1998/1999 despite my personal wealth being estimated at £18bn – the result of my career as a major impressario of such legendary pop 'n' roll artistes as Mr Alvin Starbucks, Mr Chris Reallybad, and the Grapefruit Segments.

The misunderstanding by the media of these financial technicalities has a simple explanation.

In the year in question I worked entirely without remuneration, raising money for a number of well-known charities including the Gnome Trust For Distressed Music Moguls, Peers in Need and the Gnome Foundation For The Development Of Tax Havens. *(Surely "Native Peoples Of The Cayman Islands"? E.S.)*

Apart from this, my energies have been entirely devoted to political affairs, acting in the service of that great man – myself. *(Surely "Tony Blair"? E.S.)*

If the motives of such selfless, unpaid work are to be questioned by the gutterpress, then who will wish to come forward to serve their country as I have done? Mark my words, we will end up with a group of nobodies whose only interest is in making money and avoiding paying tax.

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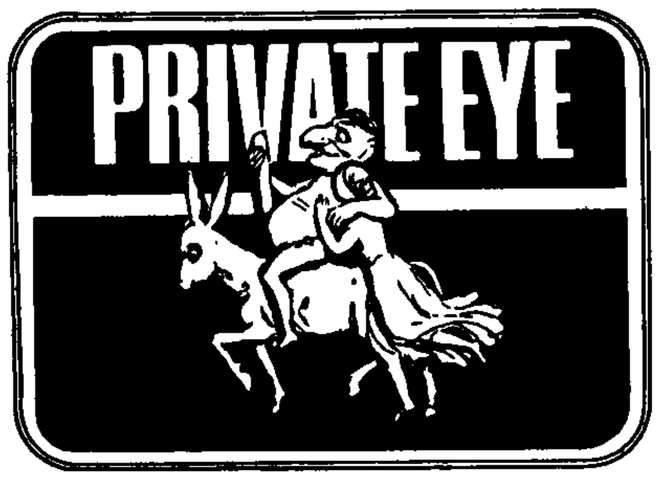
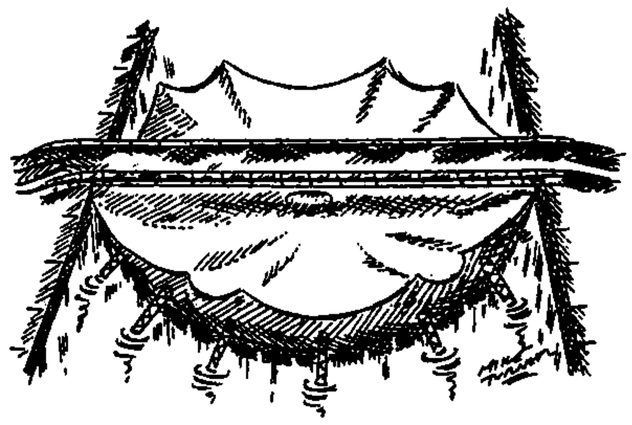


101 Uses For A Dome



Millennium Bridge Safety Net

GONG-HO!

THE latest honours' list – with its baubles for soap-opera stars and best-selling authors – is said to represent all that's best and brightest in Rev Blair's New Britain. If so, Old Britain has nothing to fear: there are gongs for all the usual suspects – the governor of the Bank of England, the head of MI5, arms dealers galore and various right-wing offshore billionaires.

Nor is there much evidence of Robin Cook's ethical foreign policy. Among the names in his foreign office list is Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, who has been made a CMG "for services to UK-Latin American relations". Can this by any chance by the same Viscount Montgomery who, along with Margaret Thatcher and Norman Lamont, spent the last couple of years vigorously defending that well-known champion of ethics, General Augusto Pinochet?

WHEN he appeared as a guest on television show *Room 101*, chat show host Michael Parkinson was vehement in his criticism of the honours system.

He declared that he would not accept an honour if he were offered one, and that if he were Australian he would be a republican.

Since the programme was filmed in February 1999, Parky has undergone a miraculous transformation. In the Queen's birthday honours list he accepted... a CBE.

CONGRATULATIONS to rugby star Jerry Guscott, awarded the MBE only seven months after his acquittal on charges of assault and causing actual bodily harm.

Guscott's alleged victim, Bath antiques dealer Ken Jones, claimed that while crossing the road he was nearly knocked down by Guscott's Mercedes, which he said had jumped a red light. After Guscott pulled up, Jones remonstrated with the rugby player by tapping on his window with a ball of string which he happened to be carrying. According to his account, Guscott then shoved him across the pavement and broke his ankle.

The jury, however, preferred to believe Guscott's version of events. This was that Guscott had been driving through an amber light when a man stepped out in front of him. He stopped the car, only to see the man advancing towards him with a threatening object, which he thought might be a rock. He pushed Jones away in "self-defence".

Guscott was cleared of all charges. But he can hardly be said to have emerged without a stain on his character. In a shop security video which recorded the incident he can be heard yelling at Jones: "Who the fuck do you think you are? Who the fuck do you think you are doing that? You don't take fucking liberties like that ever. EVER! You don't take fucking liberties mate..."

A few seconds later, there is a loud thump, followed by several bangs. Jones can then be heard shouting to his partner: "Help Maggie, this bloke... Think he's just broke my leg, take his [car] number... Get an ambulance... bouncing me against the wall."

Guscott's barrister, Sally Bennett-Jenkins, told Bristol crown court that his actions were "perfectly reasonable" and the jury agreed. As, evidently, does HM the Queen, who has graciously named him as a Member of the British Empire.

SOME PEOPLE have wondered if Sam Mendes isn't a little young to be given the CBE. What nonsense. Not only has he directed an Oscar-winning movie, he has also done his fair share of "public service", even if it has not hitherto been publicised.

Four years ago, at the behest of the Blairite apparatchik David Miliband, an old schoolfriend, Mendes attended the Labour party conference to advise on how its "staging" could be improved. And, as all observers agree, every party conference since then has been quite perfectly stage-managed. Well done, Sam!

NO NAME on new Labour's royal honours list proves its distance from the old Tory privileged past than that of the new knight, Sir David Rowe-Beddoe, chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Rowe-Beddoe's appointment by the Tory government in 1994 caused uproar on the Labour benches, which grew into fury when it was revealed that the new WDA chairman lived in Monte Carlo, where he led Conservatives Abroad, an organisation founded to drum up support for the Tory party among the tax exiles who lived in Monte Carlo but still retained their right to vote in Britain.

Labour fury continued throughout Rowe-Beddoe's career as top Tory quangocrat in Wales, which ended in yet another government job – as chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales, a post which neatly doubled his annual salary.

However, as so often, the new Labour government when it took office suddenly appreciated the talents of its predecessors' placemen. Early in 1998 Rowe-Beddoe was appointed chairman of Economic Powerhouse for Wales, a government body which took in the WDA, the DBRW and the Land Authority for Wales. A couple of years later, Tory David becomes "new" Labour Sir David.

AN *Eye* reader who is a regular blood donor recently read about a man called Tom Horne, who had donated no fewer than 100 pints of his blood over the years. Feeling that this remarkable and selfless achievement deserved some sort of recognition, he wrote to Downing Street proposing Horne for an honour.

Back came the reply from Ms Abby Oshodi in the nominations unit. "The prime minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 6 June nominating Mr Tom Horne for an honour. I am sorry to have to tell you that it will not be possible to consider Mr Horne for an honour as awards are to recognise meritorious service to the community or contribution to public life in this country."

Indeed. How foolish to imagine that a lifetime of giving blood (and time) could possibly be as "meritorious" as the services of Michael Ashcroft or Carol Vorderman.

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"The fight's over, Mr Tyson"

MAN IN THE EYE

THIS should have been a big week for Sir Richard Branson: at last he would learn if he'd beaten Camelot to win the next lottery licence. Last Friday night, however, the National Lottery Commission (NLC) suddenly announced that it was postponing its decision until at least August.

The main reason for the delay, it seems, was that the NLC had been alarmed by our story in *Eye* 999 detailing Branson's habit of promising more than he delivers. Since his lottery bid depends entirely on promises – to create "a millionaire a day", to raise £15bn for good causes, etc – the commissioners decided that further investigation was necessary.

They asked Branson for a copy of the "statement of defence" recently submitted by Tom Bower, whom he is suing for libel. Bower's document is thought to include further examples of, er, "lack of straightforwardness" by Beardie. Branson said he would hand it over only after he'd written a reply to the Bower defence, which would not be until after the end of June – too late for the NLC, or so he thought.

No wonder Sir Richard is reported to be "enraged" by the lottery postponement, especially since he'd been running a carefully timed hype campaign to coincide with the June deadline. *Forbes* magazine, whose adverts he has sometimes appeared in, features the grinning tycoon on the cover of its current issue, along with a gushing 3,000-word feature inside. "The sun never sets on Richard Branson's empire," it drools. "Today the Virgin logo is emblazoned on hundreds of products."

Hundreds? Wisely, the mag does not try to justify this absurd exaggeration by actually listing them. *Forbes* also claims that he turned down a knighthood last year because he was "embarrassed" by complaints of late and shabby trains on Virgin Rail. Happily, "things have turned round" and he thus felt able to accept one. In fact the first knighthood offered to Branson was the one he accepted.

The other half of his PR blitz consists of trying to suppress any bad news about Virgin – no easy task, since there's so much of it just waiting to explode. Take Virgin's new online auto-trading venture, which was launched four weeks ago with all the usual Bransonian hoopla, promising huge savings by importing cars from mainland Europe.

When a *Telegraph* hack took the trouble to do a comparative study, he found that some cars on the Virgin website were nearly £2,000 *more expensive* than those available from a car showroom in Slough. But no other hack followed up the story – least of all the *Mirror*'s motoring pundit Quentin Willson, who now has a second job working for, er, Virgin cars.

Hacks on both the *Guardian* and the *Economist* have recently received threatening phone calls from Branson's PR man Will Whitehorn, accusing them of being in cahoots with Tom Bower. The success of Whitehorn's spin-doctoring can be judged by the deafening silence that greeted the resignation of Virgin finance chief Stephen Murphy two weeks ago. No newspaper apart from the *Grauniad* – not even the *FT* – reported this news at all, having been assured by Whitehorn that Murphy was a figure of no great consequence in the Virgin group.

In fact Murphy has been a director of more than 50 Virgin companies since joining Branson six years ago. More importantly, he knows all the financial secrets. He spent much of last year in Geneva, running the complex and secret network of offshore companies through which Branson ultimately controls Virgin. His unexpected departure, a mere fortnight before the lottery commission was due to decide whether Branson can create good organisations and keep talented staff, could have been disastrous. Luckily, thanks to Whitehorn, the commissioners may not be aware of it...

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Street Of Shame

PRINCE WILLIAM's 18th birthday gave royal hacks an excuse to churn out endless column inches of idle speculation dressed-up as fact.

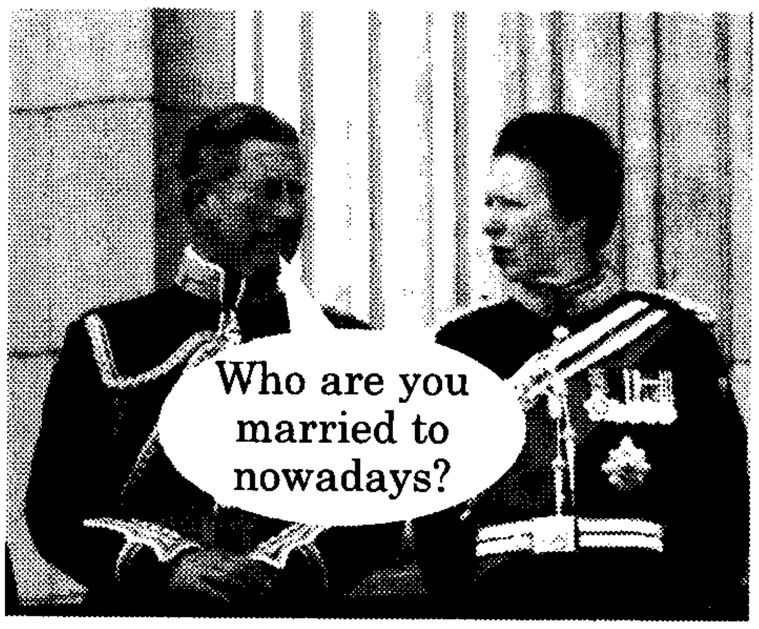
Some, like Christopher Morgan in the *Sunday Times*, announced that the Queen and Prince Charles are at war over the young prince, claiming that Charles is denying his mother access to her eldest grandson until she acknowledges Camilla's existence in public. According to others, such as Ingrid Seward in the *Mail on Sunday*, there is no disagreement. Indeed, she insists Brenda and William are best mates, meeting most days for a cucumber sandwich and a chat about the best way to wear a crown.

Of course newspaper readers pays their money and takes their choice. But no one's royal mole appears to have passed on news of the real William debate at the top of the palace hierarchy: should he go to Australia?

Brenda begins a golden jubilee tour of the Commonwealth at the end of 2001 which will include Oz. Aware that another vote on Australia becoming a republic is likely soon after the visit, and in possession of poll figures showing that Australians want the crown to pass to William, not Charles, after the Queen's death, Buckingham Palace is prepared to send William on the Australian leg of the tour with granny in a deliberate attempt to swing public opinion.

Although the prince's first official overseas visit would be presented as a goodwill gesture to Australians, palace strategists are aware that it could easily backfire as a rather obvious stunt. But a lot's at stake. The palace is worried by its own privately-commissioned research which shows that once Australia falls to the republicans, New Zealand and Canada are likely to follow within 10 years. After that, how long could the monarchy survive in Britain? Young William had better use his birthday money to buy a surfboard and soon.

NEW LOOK ROYALS No. 94



JUST FANCY THAT!

FRIENDS of Rod Richards, the former MI5 officer and parliamentary under secretary at the Welsh Office, while rejoicing at his acquittal on charges of assault against two young women whom he met in a coffee bar, may have missed the following paragraph in *Eye* 900 in June 1996.

The paragraph appeared under the mysterious headline: "The Irresistible Fall of Rod The Rod", and the even more mysterious sub-heading: "Swordsman of the Valleys":

"There is hardly a woman journalist in Wales who has not been stunned by Richards's certainty about his sexual prowess and attraction. One political journalist made a formal complaint to her editor about Richards's bovine insistence on being invited to her flat and not leaving when asked. Another journalist managed to rid herself of Richards with some difficulty before making her way to her flat, only to have her window showered with gravel thrown up at it by the determined under secretary of state."

FLEET STREET's most bibulous diarist, John McEntee, seems determined to pursue his cruel vendetta against poor Nigel Dempster, widely recognised as the author of more exclusive stories about Robert Sangster and Luis Basualdo than anyone else in the world.

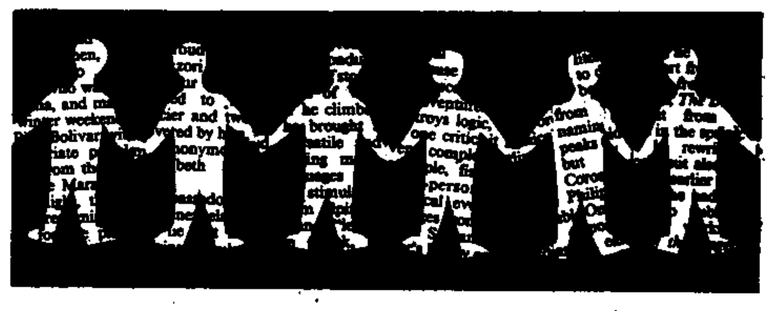
McEntee barely managed to keep his job at the *Express* last year after viciously mocking the death of Dumpster's beloved dog, Tulip. The furious *Mail* man wrote letters of complaint to both Rosie Boycott and milord Hollick, and even tried to persuade the RSPCA to prosecute his rival (although, strangely, it refused).

Now McEntee is bemoaning his loss of a major exclusive about Princess Michael's party for her tired and emotional son Lord Frederick Windsor. As McEntee revealed, "before I could get into print, a version of the tale appeared in the column of my so-called rival Nigel Dempster. 'How so?' I asked my source. 'I'm afraid Princess Margaret told Dempster,' he sighed. 'She can't stand Princess Michael'."

This is a scandalous accusation, as Princess Mick's close relationship with Humpty Dumpster has resulted in numerous sycophantic stories in the *Mail* diary. She would clearly be devastated if she thought that her beloved Nigel was cooperating with Princess Margaret and playing off each side against the other.

Thankfully, however, McEntee's outrageous claim appeared only in the Irish edition of the *Express*, so it's unlikely that Princess Michael will ever learn of Dempster's alleged duplicity.

HOW THEY ARE RELATED



THE latest instalment of "Teenage Kicks", the new *Observer* column by Anna Stothard, a typical 16-year-old who, by an extraordinary coincidence, is the daughter of the editor of the *Times* Peter Stothard, discusses the trials and tribulations of work-experience.

Ms Stothard pontificates on photocopying and making coffee during her three-week internship in New York, but somehow fails to mention the scene of her placement – none other than *Talk* magazine, edited by her mother's best friend Tina Brown.

Anna is merely continuing an old family tradition by turning to old friends to land a plummy job. Her father worked in a management position at Shell Oil, before deciding in 1979 that he actually wanted to be a hack. In no time at all he had landed a job on the *Sunday Times*, courtesy of the then editor, Harry Evans, husband of, er, Tina Brown.

WHY have so many column inches been devoted to the proposal to house a few asylum-seekers at a deserted boarding school in the Somerset village of Over Stowey?

The *Daily Mail* thought it worthy of a full-page scare story, while *Daily Telegraph* columnist Daniel Johnson weighed in with a long and furious philippic. No doubt this is entirely unrelated to the fact that the *Daily Mail*'s veteran why-oh-why merchant Paul Johnson has a house in the village, where his son Daniel is also a regular weekend visitor.

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Sunday Telegraph

SPARE a thought for Oliver August, the *Times* man in Beijing, who was despatched to follow up the Chinese end of the story about those 58 unfortunates found dead in a lorry at Dover.

Having misheard the area where they were alleged to have started their journey, he set off for the remote town of Jiangle, where he interviewed puzzled locals about their "missing relatives" but drew a blank. Meanwhile, his *Telegraph* rival David Rennie wrote a detailed half-page report by the simple expedient of going to the correct place – Changle County, 250 miles away.

HOW EDITORS WORK

IF there's one thing upon which friends and enemies of *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan agree, it is that 10 Downing Street helped him out during the City Slickers debacle.

Hacks at Canary Wharf feared that Moron's reprieve would not only undermine the paper's credibility but also make Piers even more of a Blair puppet than he was already. And their fears were spectacularly justified in the issues of 8, 9 and 10 June, when the *Mirror* obediently followed the Campbell spin that the Rev Blair's hostile reception from the WI was all the work of one far-right old lady – a ludicrously desperate excuse that not even other pro-Blair papers swallowed.

The front page of 9 June was doubly illuminating. Alongside the attempt to defend Blair against the WI, the *Mirror* ran a second political story. It was a massive hype of the speech by trade secretary Stephen Byers championing the euro. The *Mirror*'s "exclusive" was fed by Alastair Campbell to the paper's recently appointed political editor Peter McMahon – an old Campbell acolyte who was recommended for his new job by none other than the Downing Street spokesman himself.

Moron now seems to assume his tenure at the *Mirror* is "fireproof". Even his supporters fear his resumed bumptiousness. When one asked him about rumours that Rebekah Wade had been courted to replace him during Slickergate, Moron snorted with contempt. "Why consider a third-rate copy of me," he demanded, "when you've got the real thing?"

MEANWHILE at the *Sun* fears are growing for editor David Yelland's sanity following his latest rambling editorials lamenting the spread of yob culture.

Quite unlike the sort of culture promoted by Yelland's *Sun*, of course – as proved by his sponsorship of the entirely wholesome and unyobbish *Lock Stock* TV series.

PARSIMONY rules at the *Economist*, where editor Bill Emmott is concerned about the rising cost of the buffet lunch for staff every press Wednesday. The problem, he tells hacks in a memo, is partly down to "increased individual consumption (seconds, thirds, fourths)..."

The guzzling has to stop, warns Emmott: "I don't want to introduce portion control... but could everyone please realise the cost implications." The Ed will presumably be leading by example and foregoing that extra chicken drumstick. On the other hand, with a salary last year of £168,000 and a total "remuneration package" of £783,000 including benefits and shares, fiscally prudent Bill could afford to treat them all at McDonald's.

DAVID BECKHAM's one-fingered salute to abusive English fans in the Euro 2000 England match against Portugal caused consternation at the *Daily Mail* news conference the next day over what line to take.

Editor Paul Dacre turned to executive editor John Steafel and asked what he would have done if someone hurled similar insults at his wife and child. Steafel replied that he would have responded in the same way as Beckham. "Nonsense," retorted Dacre. "I say that kind of thing to you every day."

OBSERVERS of the *Observer* were disappointed not to read the views of editor Roger Alton in all the media fuss about cocaine abuse.

Does Alton think it causes unusual behaviour, lack of judgement, sudden sexual urges and an unhealthy desire to be in the toilet for long periods of time?

"Discussing Colombia" is a priority in newspapers nowadays and readers, like journalists, can't get enough of it.

HACKWATCH

Losing The Plot

SEVERAL magazines now carry a regular "soap update" for the benefit of readers who have missed recent episodes of *Emmerdale*, *Coronation Street*, *The Archers*, etc. But no such service exists for people who are trying to keep up with the storylines in Fleet Street's own columnar soap operas. Here, in the first of an occasional series, is the story so far...

Neighbours

Julie[1] has written a piece in the *Guardian* about the joys of her coke-snorting days – which are now behind her, or so she claims. Julie's friend Deborah[2] is rather cross about this, and decides to reply via her own column in the *Independent*. "I do know that she is not being completely frank about her own drug use," Deborah writes. "My husband[3] is a recovering drug addict and alcoholic... He interviewed Julie last year, clean and sober. Ms Burchill was using drugs then and invited Will to visit her when he's given up giving up. But my husband can never 'give up giving up', and the fact that Ms Burchill does not understand that is testament to the fact that she simply does not understand drug problems."

Now it's Julie's turn to get a bit cross with Deborah. "As for my not being completely frank about my drug use," she writes to the *Indie*, "I would point out that the last time we met, the 'clean' Will Self smoked marijuana incessantly... I too remember many happy evenings doing coke in various forms with both Deborah and Will." Still, never mind: "I like and respect Deborah..."

Julie proves the point in her next *Guardian* column: "I don't know if you saw the *Observer* last weekend but there were the most gorgeous photos in the colour supplement of Will Self, his three children and his wife, the journalist Deborah Orr..." They looked, she adds cattily, like "an advert for Sunny Delight". And, after staring at the photos for two days, Julie suddenly realised: "I was free. For the first time in 10 years, *I didn't fancy Will Self!*"

Meanwhile, Will has been sitting in a Soho gallery as a living work of art, while also finding the time to promote his new novel. In an interview with the *Nottingham Evening Post*, he says that his wife "finds it hard to understand him". In the *Observer*, Will tells Lynn Barber that he and Deborah are going on holiday with their new best friends Andrew and India.

EastEnders

India[4] has tried a new Alsatian restaurant in Islington – "Alastian as in Alsace rather than the big scary dog, or 'woofins', as they are known to my youngest son and lunching companion, Archie (4)". Archie and his older brother Oscar (7) both liked it, she reports in the *Sunday Times*. As did "my boyfriend, Rab C. Nesbitt (31)". Rab – who is actually called Andrew[5] – ordered something called a Sausage Sampler, "which immediately made him snigger... he can't look at a sausage without creasing up".

Back at Wapping, India writes a column about her new novel. When she first showed the book to her boyfriend, she recalls, Andrew congratulated her on creating a "brilliant grotesque" in the central character. "But I didn't make her up," she had to explain. "It's me!" No wonder India's ex-husband Jeremy[6] is a worried man. While she was writing a regular *Observer* column a couple of years ago, India gave a detailed account of how he had left her. ("My husband wants to find himself. I suggest he looks up his own arse.") Now he fears that he'll be a character in the novel – especially since India says in her *Sunday Times* column that her heroine's husband "redefines the word 'anal'." So he reads the book and... writes a *Sunday Times* column about it.

"Well, it could have been worse," he concludes, deciding that the husband is "really not me at all", apart from sharing certain unspecified lavatorial habits.

Casualty

Rebecca[7] and Matthew[8] have been arguing about the garden again. This, she reveals in her column, is one of their most frequent rows, along with "You're a fine one to talk about wasting money" and "No, no, it was your tone of voice that started it". They are so busy bickering that it takes a whole week before they notice that their son Louis has fractured his leg. When Rebecca regales people with the story, Matthew stands by making disapproving faces.

But their most frequent row of all concerns Matthew's imaginary illnesses. "If you lost your hypochondria," she tells him, "you'd lose the crutch on which you limp through life." In *his* column, Matthew notes that "somehow the pedantic mid-sentence placement of the preposition irritates me even more than the sentiment". His latest symptom is a pain in the left thumb and elbow – brought on, as Rebecca observes unsympathetically, by playing FIFA 2000 football on the Playstation with his friend Giles[9] until 2.30am.

Meanwhile, a man arrives to fix their washing-up machine, in which a plastic knife handle has welded itself to the heating element. Matthew stands by making disapproving faces.

Home and Away

James[10] has written a novel, which he hopes will make him as famous as Alain de Botton. But he's still unhappy. "I deserve a big, well-paid 'me' column in a national newspaper," he grumbles, "and no one has offered me one." Instead he has to use his TV column in the *Spectator* to inform us that he and his wife, Tiffany[11], have moved house. "Moving house is hell, isn't it? You've got new nannies to find, builders to supervise..." They also have a lodger in their basement, and "I expect he'll be starring quite a lot in future columns". When the lodger fails, however, there are always the children. After watching Harry Enfield as Kevin the Teenager, James tells his teenage stepson[12]: "But he's so like you!"

Meanwhile, Tiffany continues to work hard on her own column. "I promise not to bore you about being pregnant," she announces in May – but then devotes her next two columns to the subject, noting that "husband James has been acting strange of late". She thinks her pregnancy must have something to do with it. "Mind you, so far, this time round is nothing like as bad as when we were expecting Ivo." That was when James turned into a self-pitying hypochondriac – until "I lost my temper, burst into tears and screamed that I was the one who was pregnant and needed sympathy". This time, James simply complains that his hair is thinning and life is passing him by. "God, I wish he could be pregnant sometimes," she fumes. "Then he'd know how I felt."

James is also pretty annoyed with Tiffany's 13-year-old son Jim, who when not behaving like Kevin the Teenager has started talking like Ali G. But Tiffany finds the boy's antics quite charming. During a miserable, rain-sodden holiday, James finally explodes. "Why do you always have to take Jim's side?" he shouts at Tiffany. The couple then have another blazing row. "Hey, chill, mum," says Jim.

1 Julie Burchill, *Guardian* columnist.
2 Deborah Orr, *Independent* columnist.
3 Will Self, *Independent on Sunday* columnist.
4 India Knight, *Sunday Times* columnist.
5 Andrew O'Hagan, *Daily Telegraph* columnist.
6 Jeremy Langmead, editor, *Sunday Times* Style section.
7 Rebecca Tyrrel, *Sunday Telegraph* columnist.
8 Matthew Norman, *Guardian* columnist.
9 Giles Smith, *Daily Telegraph* columnist.
10 James Delingpole, *Spectator* columnist.
11 Tiffany Daneff, *Daily Telegraph* columnist.
12 Jim, aged 13, who does not have a national newspaper column – yet.

IN the wake of the Dear Leader's abominable experience at the hands of the WI and the continued slide in the government's poll ratings, some of the erstwhile courtiers are turning on their lord and master.

One of the first to turn on Blair was the former Bennite turned Blairite turned "whoever-it-is-will-have-me-next", Lord Sawyer. Once trusted by Blair "to sort" the Labour party out, Sawyer was moved into position as party general-secretary by Blair, in the process ousting the less malleable Larry Whitty. Sawyer's elevation to the peerage did not come with a government job attached, an oversight that Sawyer's lordly peers blame for the intensity of Sawyer's attacks.

Next in line to take a pop was Frank Field, the maverick minister who Blair hoped – and he, Field, earnestly believed – would "do the unthinkable" to welfare spending – ie cut it. Field's dream of putting into practice 30 years' worth of theorising soon came adrift as he became an early casualty of the regime. As a succession of lesser mortals, from Tony Wright MP, the self-proclaimed "Blairite of Blairites", to former Millbank wonk and apparatchik Matthew Taylor, lose no time to jump aboard the retreating bandwagon, the bets are on as to who will be the first minister to cut loose.

With John Prescott cutting an increasingly forlorn, clapped-out figure and Gordon Brown as busy as he has always been planning for his succession, the hot money is on Jack Straw or David Blunkett being first over the stockades.

TONY BLAIR has upset Buckingham Palace again. This time it's because he formally ruled out a bank holiday on Friday 4 August to mark the Queen Mother's centenary.

As the decision had been leaked at the same time as the BBC was under fire for refusing to televise her birthday pageant, the prime minister's confirmation of the decision in a written parliamentary answer went almost unreported. So too did his claim that the royal household had been consulted and was "content" with the decision.

Well, the palace was formally consulted and Sir Robin Janvrin, Brenda's private secretary, and Sir Alastair Aird, the Queen Mother's top corgi, lobbied for a day off as the old lady herself had let it be known she was all for the idea. It all seemed a foregone conclusion.

Blair was miffed, however, because Janvrin and Aird had warned him not to use the royals for his own ends in the run-up to the next general election. And after his clumsy suggestion that he should read the lesson at the Queen Mother's centenary service in St Paul's was rebuffed, as was his attempt to get her birthday reception staged in his beloved Greenwich White Elephant, Blair was fuming.

Officially the bank holiday is off because Tony gave us an extra day off to celebrate the millennium and is pledged to give us another to mark the Queen's golden jubilee in 2002. But to record the palace as being "content" is somewhat wide of the mark.

FRESHLY-ELECTED Tottenham MP David Lammy, aka "the black Tony Blair", made the usual victory speech at last week's by-election, thanking police, returning officer, party workers, etc. He then singled out "my minder, Mark Covell" for special thanks. Who he?

Readers may remember Covell from *Eye* 983, when we reported how he carried out his former role as chief spin doctor for "new" Labour in the north. When the *Observer*'s Nick Cohen was preparing an article about the ongoing corruption scandal in Doncaster, Covell's response was to attempt crude smears against those who have blown the whistle on the graft, such as TV scriptwriter Ron Rose.

He told Cohen that Rose himself was being investigated by the Inland Revenue over vast sums in unpaid taxes (he wasn't) and, bizarrely, that Rose was obsessed with conspiracy theories about Diana's death (he isn't). Covell pooh-poohed the extent of the corruption in Doncaster, despite the fact that at the time of his conversation with Cohen in August last year, 27 councillors and officers had been arrested. (The figure has since risen to 41.)

THE newest MP in the Commons could well be ex-British Airways PR chief David Burnside, who learnt his trade during BA's "Dirty Tricks" campaign against Virgin.

Burnside, who left BA abruptly after the company was forced to pay £3.6m in libel damages and costs to Branson's firm, has been selected by the Ulster Unionist Party to fight the South Antrim by-election. The late Clifford Forsythe held the seat for the UUP from its creation in 1983 and won the last election with a majority of more than 16,000. The main challenge to Burnside will come from the gospel-singing Rev Willie McCrea of Ian Paisley's DUP.

Burnside was once close to David Trimble, but with unionist opposition to the Good Friday Agreement growing, he has performed a timely switch to the "No" camp in recent months. There has been no such backtracking over his controversial BA career, however. Just before being selected by the Ulster Unionists, he declared himself "more than proud" of everything he did at BA and pledged to fight a similar "hard professional campaign" in South Antrim.

WITH extraordinarily bad timing, home secretary Jack Straw chose to announce the government's new crackdown on corruption and bribery at home and abroad just days after the American offices of British construction giant Balfour Beatty were raided by FBI agents in a fraud investigation.

It is alleged that Balfour Beatty and its partner in a multi-million dollar project to build a high-speed rail track have been paid "hundreds of thousands of dollars" more for the work than the originally agreed amount.

This latest charge against Balfour Beatty is unlikely to have the slightest bearing on the impending decision by the government's export credits guarantee department (ECGD), part of the department of trade and industry, on whether to back the company's bid for part of the contract to build the controversial Ilisu dam in Turkey's Kurdish heartlands.

No doubt DTI minister Patricia Hewitt will again defend Balfour Beatty to the hilt, as she did in February when reminded that the company had been charged with bribery in the Lesotho dam project (see *Eye* 997).

Another firm which stands charged with bribery in Lesotho is Kier, a construction firm which numbers competition commission chairman Graham Corbett among its non-executive directors.

On 15 June Labour MP John Austin tabled 11 parliamentary questions for trade and industry secretary Stephen Byers, asking whether the ECGD has any formal procedures in place to check allegations of corruption against the British companies to which it gives funding, or their directors.

In the interests of joined-up government Straw and Byers will surely be meeting soon with officials from the ECGD to discuss the fact that 35 out of 54 companies banned from contracting with the World Bank for violating its fraud and corruption guidelines are... British.

MAN SHOT IN LOS BOLICHES

The Town Crier (Malaga)

TORY defector Shaun "Stiffy" Woodward has discovered, much to his horror, that his long-standing friendship with Peter Mandelson is not enough to guarantee him a safe Labour seat in time for the next election.

Interviewed by Steve Richards in the *New Statesman* last week, "Stiffy" must have impressed readers with his reverence for "our forefathers" in the movement. And how could readers not have been moved by "Stiffy's" obvious enthusiasm for Labour history, as his interviewer casually spotted a copy of *Labour's Century* parked quite unostentatiously on the coffee table...

But what to do? "Stiffy" isn't having much luck with the comrades; and there is the bind of finding a seat not too far from his Cotswold pile. Still, the not too far away Labour seat of Gloucester is up for grabs. It could yet become messy enough for Millbank to intervene in order to impose "Stiffy" on the delighted Labourites perhaps?

"Get me a spin-accountant"

NO PHOTO opportunity is too trivial, it seems, for Jackie Ballard, the publicity hungry Lib Dem MP for Taunton.

She managed to get her picture in the *Somerset County Gazette* a splendid four times in one edition earlier this month: Bollard finding out about life behind the counter at a post office; Bollard saying family life was A Good Thing; Bollard attending the launch of a brochure about adoption; and, most riveting of all, Bollard opening... a new toilet block at the York Inn, Churchinford.

But even Jackie Ballard is not as creative with her photo-ops as Putney's Labour MP Tony Colman. On the day Ballard was opening a pissoir in a pub, Colman was pictured in his local rag handing over a cheque for £9,000 to a primary school headteacher, claiming it was from the chancellor of the exchequer.

Several school governors and parents expressed alarm at this apparent change to the education funding system, whereby dosh was now dished out by individual MPs. Alarm turned to anger, however, when it was revealed that the whole thing was a fake: Colman had "presented" a blank cheque out of his own chequebook. The school will actually get its extra £9,000 via the LEA later this year.

THE curse of Swansea has struck again with the resignation of 20-year-old Ben Pickering as prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate for Swansea West following a row over a £1m gay blockbuster he planned to film.

Pickering and his co-director at Pink Films Ltd, Mark Cainen, appealed for backers for *Come and Go* via a website which has now closed. They claimed that several actors, including Toby Sawyer of teen soap *Hollyoaks* and Sue Hodge, best known as Mimi in *Allo Allo*, had agreed to appear in the film. But when the *South Wales Evening Post* contacted the actors' agents they denied any involvement.

Welsh assembly leader Rhodri Morgan used his parliamentary privilege in the chamber to accuse Pickering of fraud on 14 June. This was in response to a question from Tory leader in the assembly Nick Bourne, one of Pickering's referees in his bid to become PPC.

Another Bourne protegé is Pickering's predecessor Andrew Baker, who failed to win Swansea West in 1997. After Baker was fined £900 by Cardiff magistrates in 1998 for stalking a married woman, Bourne commented: "There is no malice in Andrew at all and I hope he can put all this behind him very quickly. He remains a friend of mine."

The curse is not restricted to Tories. Liberal Democrat PPC for Swansea East, Shane Sinclair, was forced to step down in May after it was revealed he had been posting sympathetic messages on an extreme Ulster Loyalist web site.

VETERAN Liverpool Labour leftwinger Bob Wareing surprised Millbank – and probably himself – by seeing off a dastardly plan to de-select him.

"Slobo-Bob" was lucky to have a few friends in the Campaign Group of MPs who were prepared to pick-up the phone to party members on his behalf; yet the whole experience has left "Slobo" with a nasty taste in the mouth. So much so that for the first time in 17 years as member for West Derby, he has invested in a constituency office in, er, West Derby.

But weeks after this brave initiative, the sign above the new office reads: "Bob Wareing MP Constituency Office. Tel..." It may be good to move, but not necessarily to talk.

FOCUS ON UKIP

THE leaders of the UK Independence Party continue to insist that they will have no truck with far-right outfits such as the British National Party (see recent letters to the *Eye*, ad nauseam). If they want to be believed, however, perhaps they should be more careful about the company they keep.

On the afternoon of Sunday 23 April this year, a freelance photographer walking through central London happened to notice a group of people assembling in Whitehall Place, carrying union flags and St George flags. It turned out to be a UKIP march against the single currency.

Her photos, which the *Eye* has obtained, show that among the marchers were several prominent BNP stalwarts – including Tony "The Bomber" Lecomber, a man with criminal convictions for explosives offences and, more recently, for beating up a Jewish schoolteacher. Lecomber and his fellow-fascists seemed to be quite welcome: no attempt was made by stewards to discourage their presence or prevent them selling their newspapers.

One of the new UKIP leaders who has been most loudly proclaiming his sweet reasonableness is Tony Bennett, assistant to the party leader Jeffrey Titford MEP. But his emails and messages on the party's bulletin board tell a rather different story.

Bennett is an anti-Catholic conspiracy theorist who makes the Rev Ian Paisley look like a moderate. The 12 stars of the EU flag, he believes, are "in effect the flag of the old Holy Roman Empire, ie the Papacy. It represents the woman of the 12 stars in Revelation 12 vv.1-2". In short, the EU has been secretly created and controlled by "the most powerful political institution in the world" – no, not UKIP but the Roman Catholic church, which "looks backs fondly to the days of the Holy Roman Empire and the Inquisition and uses every means at its disposal to promote its return".

Another UKIP member, Ian Sadler, recently wrote a book with the evocative title *Mystery, Babylon The Great: The Church of Rome and the European Union Exposed to the Light of Truth*. In a rave review of this magnificently loopy work, Bennett tried to silence doubters by posing a few questions: "Which institution put to death around 60 million people during the Inquisition? Which organisation manipulated Mussolini into power in the 1920s and Hitler in the 1930s? To which religious organisation do Jacques Delors, Jacques Santer and Romano Prodi belong? To which religious organisation does the prime minister Tony Blair's wife belong and is the prime minister a secret member of already?"

Despite all this, Bennett has been vigorously defended by UKIP's new chairman, Mike Nattrass. Presumably Nattrass hopes no one will remember that he has previously denounced Bennett as a "Don Quixote" who should be expelled from the party. As recently as 22 March this year, Nattrass announced on the Ukiplist bulletin board that "if Tony Bennett stays in this party, to wreck it, I shall resign. He is totally uncontrollable".

Now, a mere three months later, they are two hearts that beat as one.

'Backbiter'

RECONCILIATION LATEST

THE GREED ZONE

THE decision of Railtrack executives to award themselves bonuses and pay rises even after the Paddington crash caused general outrage (chief executive Gerald Corbett did symbolically waive his bonus, leaving him with a mere £398,000 salary).

However, safety director Rod Muttram accepted a £25,000 bonus, with four other directors grabbing between £32,000 and £37,000 worth of bonuses each. Finance director Steve Marshall got a £37,000 bonus, even though as a recent appointee he only worked for four months (appointed on 1 Dec, figures run to 31 March).

It would be wrong to think executives awarded themselves these bonuses thoughtlessly: in fact Railtrack bosses spend an extraordinary amount of time thinking about their own pay. There are not one but two committees of Railtrack directors to deal with their salaries, involving seven of the 13 board members. By contrast there is only one safety committee, which comprises just three directors.

The full-time directors' pay is decided by a committee of part-time directors, chaired by Jenny Page, who was sacked from the dome but continues to sit on the Railtrack board. Meanwhile the part-time directors pay is decided by a committee of full-time directors. By an extraordinary coincidence, Page and her chums decided to give the full-timers all generous pay rises and bonuses. The executive directors returned the compliment by giving the part-timers handsome raises — Jenny Page's own pay rose from £20,000 to £26,000.

The Curse of Gnome

IN 1994 *Private Eye* published a defamatory article about three Merseysiders: nightclub owner Henry Williams; then manager of Liverpool FC Roy Evans; and high profile lawyer Kevin Dooley.

They all sued and the *Eye* subsequently apologised to the three of them and paid out considerable sums in damages. Since then, however, we are sorry to report that all three have suffered varying degrees of misfortune.

In 1996 Williams' summer sojourn in France was unexpectedly extended when he was arrested by gendarmes on an outstanding warrant regarding heroin smuggling (Le Curse de Gnome, *Eye* 904). He spent more than five weeks in jail until a Paris judge declared he had no case to answer.

On his return to Blighty Williams encountered more bad news. Knowsley council had placed heavy restrictions on the operation of the licence for his nightclub, Ferrari's, after local residents complained about the noise and Inspector Knacker expressed concern regarding several incidents of violence both inside and outside the club.

Williams hit on the brainwave of changing the club's name to Sharks, to play down its violent image; but the joke was lost on Knowsley's licensing sub-committee and the club was closed down in April 1997. Five months later Sharks was burnt to the ground.

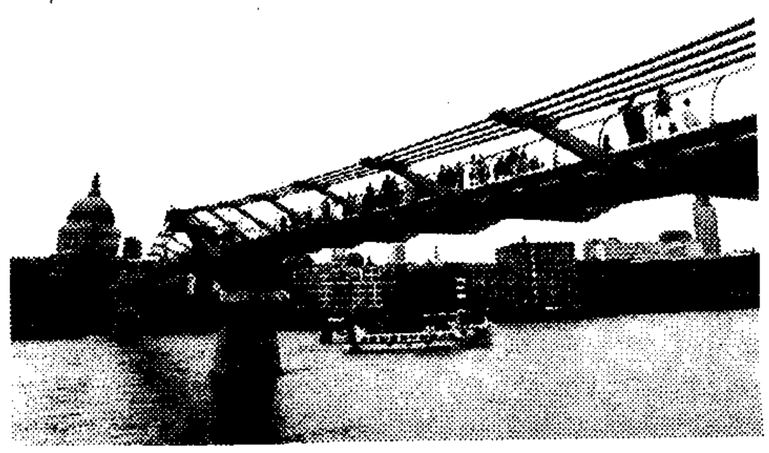
To cap it all Williams was banned from acting as a company director for seven years by the department of trade and industry. His scheme for a chain of wine bars came to nought and his companies went into receivership with debts of more than £200,000.

The next run of bad luck befell Roy Evans, when the board of Liverpool FC, unhappy with his performance, took the unusual step of appointing Gerard Houlier as co-manager. Not long after, in November 1998, Evans finally got the boot, never to return to premiership management.

Kevin Dooley is the last of the trio to be dealt a cruel hand by fickle fate. The Law Society has suspended him and closed down his offices, although the reason for this intervention has not yet been made public. A spokesman for the Office of the Supervision of Solicitors said Dooley will appear at a disciplinary hearing that could strike him off in due course.

Dooley himself has not been available for comment so far, but it is believed he will appeal against his suspension from practice.

NOOKS and CORNERS



A LITTLE note on the Millennium Bridge... Now I won't make any more remarks about rats and sinking ships as with My Lord Rogers and the cursed dome [*Eye* 1004]; nor comment on the astonishing hypocrisy of My Lord Foster in distancing himself from wretched Ove Arup & Partners when his whole career has been based on denying any distinction between architecture and engineering while grabbing all the glory when the structural engineers manage to make his masterpieces stand up and not wobble too much. No, none of that. I just want to put the débacle in historical context.

The Bouncing Bridge is far from being the first pedestrian suspension bridge to be hung across the Thames. The great I.K. Brunel designed the Hungerford Bridge in 1835 — longer and more beautiful than Foster's pretentious structure. With a footway 14 feet wide, it had a central span of 676 feet and two shorter spans of 343 feet. And it worked. At the opening on 18 April 1845, 20,000 people paid the halfpenny toll to cross it in the first hour and the proprietors were later told that "on two or three occasions there had been between 14,000 and 15,000 persons upon it, and it remained perfectly unshaken."

When Prince Albert was performing an opening ceremony nearby, a huge crowd assembled on one of the shorter spans while the centre was almost empty, but this dangerously uneven load was accommodated by the flexible "saddles" supporting the chains moving some three inches — just as designed. Eat your heart out, Norman Foster. Brunel didn't even get a knighthood, of course; let alone a peerage.

'Piloti'

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE Wagner bass John Tomlinson has been spilling the beans about fraud at the opera.

In a speech to the Royal Philharmonic Society he called for opera companies to come clean about the surreptitious amplification of voices. This is becoming almost normal practice in some places, encouraging innocent audiences to assume that Madam X or Signor Y has an instrument the size of Everest when it's actually a modest whimper that you'd never hear without a favourable wind.

What we need, said Tomlinson, is a Campaign for Real Opera. As one of the biggest (natural) voices in the business, he has nothing to lose by it.

But there are worse deceits on the perimeters of opera. The other week London Weekend Television screened a reincarnation of that ancient classic *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, complete with Bruce Forsyth and superannuated Tiller Girls. Ducking the high kicks (with some difficulty as he happens to be blind) was the popular tenor Andrea Bocelli, with supporting choir.

They made a lot of noise for what was only 20 or so singers. In fact they sounded like a fullscale symphony chorus – which is more or less exactly what you heard. The choir was miming while Bocelli crooned to something like a karaoke track. "They told us not to sing at all. Just look enthusiastic," said a singer afterwards. A representative of Sgr Bocelli's recording company was said to be very happy with the result.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

DOING THE ROUNDS

Hammersmith cover-up take three

IN *EYE* 977 M.D. exposed the second inadequate review into the imaging (X-ray) department at Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust. The problems date back to 1998 when relations between Professor Peter Dawson and the departmental head, Professor D.J. Allison, became strained.

They became strained after Dawson alerted his colleagues of the dangers to the public of the use of inexperienced junior radiologists on call, who were covered by some consultants who did insufficient interventional radiology to obtain or maintain the necessary skills.

Dawson later complained that two of his staff accounts and a Medical Research Council grant had been raided without his knowledge and called for an inquiry into financial controls within the department and Imperial College School of Medicine (ICSM). Allison then instituted disciplinary procedures against Dawson, which led to his suspension on the flimsy grounds that he had "damaged the reputation of ICSM". This was intolerable to Dawson, who subsequently resigned with a very large financial settlement.

An initial internal inquiry in 1998 was deliberately narrow in its remit but still found that "management structures were unstable and the trust should be concerned". This failed to satisfy some of the staff who lobbied for another inquiry, this time overseen by the North Thames NHS executive. An initial promise that the review would be "wide-ranging" and "embrace all relevant issues" was not evident in the final report. Even so, it uncovered a department without audit, job or work plans, with low morale, uncooperative remote management, prolonged reporting times, unreported films, inadequate scheduling and reporting of cancer patients' studies, poor provision of neonatal radiography, problems with on-call rotas, inadequate provision for acute MRI scans and problems with transcription and verification of reports.

Despite this catalogue of clinical and management problems, the review reached the staggering conclusion that the department "is providing an excellent clinical service to patients". This proved too much even for Frank Dobson, the then health secretary, who ordered a third, independent inquiry. Just the sort of job for the newly formed "independent" Commission for Health Improvement (CHI).

However, CHI wasn't up to speed and the job went instead to Professor Ian Cameron who finished his report in May. Thus far, it has remained a secret. But M.D. has seen leaked details which vindicate Professor Dawson and other staff who raised legitimate concerns. Patients were put at risk but no specific examples of harm were found because individual cases weren't considered. The financial management and misappropriation of Dawson's funds were "appalling".

Without daring to allege victimisation, Cameron has however recommended compensation be paid to an ex-departmental secretary, Christine England, and that Prof Dawson should be supported by the department of health and reemployed in the NHS. The official reason for non-publication is that some witnesses only agreed to give evidence in confidence — hardly surprising given the treatment of Dawson. This must be a relief for the trust senior management and the NHSE regional office who would be hugely embarrassed by a publication which showed that they had failed adequately to investigate serious allegations made several years ago.

The suspicion of a third cover-up became stronger still when Dame Deirdre Hine, chairman of the now functioning CHI, arrived at the Hammersmith for a roadshow this month and announced that three inquiries into the Hammersmith had been "inconclusive". Dame Deirdre may have been briefed by Cameron himself, who has now been voted on to CHI. Certainly mixed messages are being sent out. As Christine England put it: "Professor Cameron told me that his report would make any director `want to vomit'."

In what way is that inconclusive? And why has Professor Allison since announced he is resigning as clinical director? If CHI wants credibility as an independent investigator "that will leave no stone unturned", it should insist on publication of the report, just as it is bound to publish summaries of its own reports. If it's that inconclusive, why can't we read it?

M.D.

"Obviously there's no way you could live here without a very reliable car"

DOWN ON THE FARM

Op scandal

THE redoubtable Countess of Mar has joined the ever more bizarre fray surrounding the bid by hundreds of disabled sheep farmers and gulf war veterans to sue an assortment of government departments and multi-national chemical firms for damage inflicted on their health by exposure to organo-phosphorus (OP) pesticides.

Lady Mar, a sheep dip victim and patron of the gulf war veterans' association, recently challenged Lord Irvine, the lord chancellor, to explain why, after millions of pounds of legal aid have been paid out to lawyers on the two largest "group actions" in history, both cases now seem to be in greater chaos than ever.

The story she set out to peers was chilling. Since the first sheep dip case was launched in 1981, more than 60 firms of solicitors have been involved, mainly at public expense. The gulf war veterans began their actions in 1994. In 1996 the legal aid board granted a "generic certificate" to two firms, Dawbarns of Kings Lynn and Wolferstans of Plymouth, to fight on behalf of hundreds of victims of the two OP disasters.

In 1998 the Dawbarns team joined a London firm, Hodge, Jones, Allen (HJA), the senior partner of which, Henry Hodge, husband of the Blairite minister Margaret Hodge, was deputy chairman of the legal aid board. The partner responsible for all the cases was his successor Patrick Allen, who likes to show off the photo of Cherie Booth QC on his desk.

In 1999 the high court ordered that all the sheep dip cases should be joined together in a single action. But behind the scenes all was not well. First the Dawbarns team left HJA, leaving the highly lucrative contracts to be picked up by a hastily-recruited new team. There was chaos over a supposed scientific study, on which vast sums had been spent but which was finally abandoned. The Devon firm was ordered to hand over to HJA all the 500 sheep dip cases it had been handling, most involving west country farmers.

The clients became totally bemused. Many found themselves dropped from the action without explanation. Another, quoted by the countess in the Lords, described how he was "sent to an inappropriate medical co-ordinator, chosen by a lawyer without any reference to the expert group, and whose summary evidence was then thrown out" by the court. "It rapidly became clear," Lady Mar went on, "that the new legal team did not understand what it was the specialists were supposed to be doing. Instructions were confusing and contradictory. There was a failure to grasp simple science... medical data were sent out to individual clients' lawyers in a corrupted form. The wrong medical results were attributed to the wrong clients."

Last Christmas the QC on the case was summarily dismissed by Mr Allen. "The entire working relationship and trust between the carefully chosen experts and counsel", as Lady Mar put it, "was destroyed at the whim of one man with no scientific understanding". Most chilling of all, because the scientific evidence costing £900,000 is not now to be used, it seems claimants will be personally liable to repay this to the legal aid board. The countess wanted to know if the lord chancellor approved of this dismal saga? And how much public money has so far been spent on it?

Before Lord Irvine could reply there was a strange intervention from a Lib Dem peer, Lord Clement-Jones, defending Mr Allen and attempting to pour scorn on all the countess had said. Although declaring an interest as a former adviser to the association of personal injury lawyers, he did not declare any friendship with Mr Allen. Peers were later surprised to see him introducing Mr Allen round the bar.

Winding up, the lord chancellor was notably conciliatory to the countess. He admitted the sums so far contributed to the lawyers on the two generic cases totalled £2m, although millions more have been spent in legal aid on earlier phases. He expressed dismay at her "worrying allegations" and promised that the legal services commission would investigate a formal written complaint. Moves are now afoot to ensure the strongest possible case is made, coupled with a firm request that the two actions now be passed on to another firm of lawyers.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

New trains, please

WITH so many aged trains in service, why is Railtrack holding up the introduction of new ones?

As railway safety policeman Railtrack has demanded proof — not unreasonably — that new trains will be safe on each route. The problem is that in its role as the rail network's profit-driven owner, Railtrack is pitifully unable to give the train builders all the technical help they need. The builders' frustration is such that the rail regulator has now ordered a "hearing".

Adtranz and Alstom, two of the world's most experienced train builders, told the regulator in a document that has been leaked to the *Eye*: "Railtrack still does not know where its infrastructure is or how it performs. Nor does Railtrack know where its own infrastructure is non-compliant with its own norms."

Because Railtrack still does not appear to know the full detail of the assets it has owned for more than six years, train builders are claiming that Railtrack cannot tell them (as it is obliged to under its licence) the full criteria new trains must meet. Instead the builders must find out by test running and tweaking new trains for months on end.

Hundreds of new carriages for the south east have been delayed because of the risk of the electrical systems that power the trains interfering with electric signalling. Railtrack was unable to give electrical specifications and left the manufacturers to find out the hard way and largely at their own expense. (The old trains are reckoned to cause about 10 times more interference than the new, and the longer Railtrack keeps the new ones in the sidings the longer the old ones — officially condemned as insufficiently crash resistant 11 years ago — continue in service.)

Railtrack encouraged train builder Babcock to design an express freight wagon to reduce the obstruction of passenger trains by slow goods trains. When the new wagon was ready, Railtrack said it could not run at 90mph as Railtrack has no "group standards" for operation or even testing of freight trains exceeding the current 75mph limit. The wagon has just won the £3m first prize in a competition for freight innovation run by the shadow strategic rail authority.

Nor has Railtrack much idea how wide trains should be. New trains for the north-west and Wales were about to enter service this spring when Railtrack said they were too wide. Some arguments later Railtrack trimmed the edges of station platforms and highlighted the cost of the work as if it had acted out of generosity.

Had Railtrack been forced to solve the problems caused by its ignorance of its own assets' vital statistics, it could, and should, be millions of pounds worse off by now. If the regulator forces Railtrack to pay for its future incompetence, new trains may arrive faster — once Railtrack the safety policeman realises the effect its traditional attitude could have on the balance sheet of Railtrack the infrastructure owner.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

ABUSE OF THE TRUTH

AS investigations to trace children who were abused while in the care of Lambeth social services lumber on (*Eyes passim*), the words "cover-up" are being whispered in Lambeth town hall.

Two teams — one town hall based, the other part of the police's Operation Middleton — are meant to be collating incidents of child abuse over the period 1974 to 1994. However, with 14,000 children who were at risk to trace, fewer than 200 have been spoken to. Lambeth's interim chief executive Heather Du Quesnay has been told that many have not come forward for fear of reprisal. That fact that they will not enjoy anonymity may have something to do with it.

Confidence in both inquiries has been shaken, however, by the suspicion that Lambeth is desperate to limit the amount of compensation it pays to victims.

New evidence given to the *Eye* shows that in 1986 a Lambeth social worker, Jo Hughes, told both the council and the social services inspectorate that she would no longer place children in the care of a particular senior social services employee, as she had discovered that he was a Schedule 1 offender (ie with a record of serious sex offences). The response? Hughes was threatened with disciplinary action. It was not until 1994 that her advice was heeded.

No wonder Lambeth fears compensation to abuse victims could run into millions if its complete mishandling of the situation ever came to light.

HARD HERTS

IN FEBRUARY last year *Eye* 970 reported Herts county council's attempts to close one of its smallest junior schools, Gaddesden Row, near Hemel Hempstead, against local wishes.

Hertfordshire was eventually ordered to keep the school open by education secretary David Blunkett. Parents were relieved — but angry at the way the council's education department had chosen to ignore the results of its own consultation exercise and had indulged in statistical sleight of hand — for example by claiming that the school was "only half full" with 28 pupils, when it had room for 55, while ignoring the fact that the county had itself made the school turn away pupils.

Now Herts education department, under director Ray Shostak, appears to be up to its old tricks. Parents across the county are furious at an attempt to force hundreds of five year olds into less popular schools by breaking the "sibling link" which in the past meant children starting school would normally be allowed to attend the same one as an elder brother or sister.

Herts claims 87 percent of parents had agreed to a change of rules in a consultation exercise. Indeed they had — but the change they agreed to concerned separating nursery and reception admissions procedures and had nothing to do with splitting the sibling link. Parents now plan to take the council to court over its fibs.

● HOUSE FIRES kill about 100 children and maim many more in the UK every year. Families living in local authority housing are most at risk. Smoke alarms dramatically reduce the danger, but only 16 percent of local authority tenants have working smoke alarms. One of the main reasons, according to research by the institute of child health, is because councils fear they will be liable should an alarm fail to go off in the event of a blaze. In some cases they have even removed alarms. In other words, rather than risk having to pay compensation in the rare event of alarm failure, most local authorities would rather leave all families in danger.

Hats off then to Merseyside fire chief Malcolm Saunders, who has announced his intention to have smoke alarms installed in every home on his patch, starting with those of pensioners. So far, alas, it has not met with total success as the adhesive used to stick the alarms to ceilings isn't strong enough. Angry oldies report having to dodge falling alarms in their living rooms.

WILLOW PATTERN

INSPECTOR Knacker is investigating an alleged £200,000 fraud at Willow Park housing trust in Manchester.

Last year Manchester council transferred 7,000 council homes in Wythenshawe to the trust with a promise that £23m would be spent on home improvements in the first two years.

Willow Park's problems started after board member Mark Seaborn was given the job of investigating the trust's finances. His confidential report revealed that it could only muster £17m for repairs in the first two years — £6m short of what had been promised. Two weeks after his report was presented to board members, Seaborn mysteriously left the trust.

Despite the transfer of 7,000 homes, Manchester council's in-house repairs team won the maintenance contract. The fraud squad became involved when a tenants' representative discovered that £200,000 appeared to have been paid by the trust to the in-house team for repairs and maintenance work that had not been done.

All this is a touchy subject in the town hall, not least because Manchester's new lord mayor, Hugh Barrett, is a director of Willow Park housing trust and the council's chair of housing, Claire Nangle, and director of housing, Eamonn Boylan, are both on the board.

Opposition councillors have been told that as a housing trust Willow Park — despite receiving millions of pounds of public money — is not accountable to elected representatives.

VOTE EARLY, VOTE OFTEN

MEANWHILE tension is high in Manchester's marginal but apparently aptly-named Cheetham ward following allegations of vote-rigging in May's local election made by the defeated Lib-Dem councillor Qassim Afzal, which are being investigated by the returning officer. There were widespread fears before the election that rigging might take place and Qassim Afzal's Labour opponent, Afzal Khan, joined radio appeals against the practice.

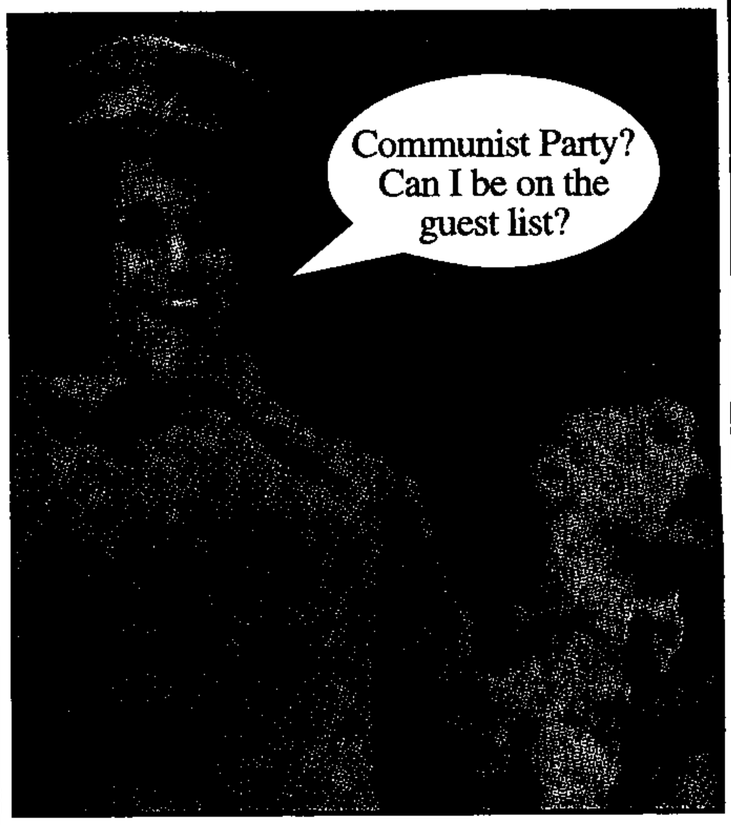
Despite these efforts Qassim Afzal says he has evidence of people turning up at polling stations on the day to find their vote had already been cast, and of postal votes cast by people who have not been resident in the UK for years.

If a voter suspects "personation" — the official term to describe a vote cast in someone else's name — they can fill in a "pink slip" which is kept in a separate box in the event that a court orders a recount. In Cheetham 11 pink slips were completed, making no difference to the final result (won by Labour with a majority of 220), but suggesting something was amiss when compared to the average of less than one pink slip in wards throughout the city.

● THE spirit of public service is alive and well in Brent, where an elderly resident had to complain about a pile of rubbish dumped outside his house. Labour councillor David Coughlin contacted the council's "Streetcare" department and asked them to remove it. But by the time Streetcare officer Selvin Rodney turned up two days later, the trash was gone — blown by the wind along the North Circular. Rather than waste a visit, however, quick-thinking Rodney noted that the old gent's hedge was overhanging the pavement and wrote to him (under Section 154 of the Highways Act 1980) ordering him to cut it back within 14 days or pay the council to hire contractors contractors to do it.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Lesley Joseph Stalin

THE NEW ORTHODOXY

High Principals

FOR many FE lecturers the arrival of Ben Johnson Hill, the Nottingham-based consultancy behind the recent cull of 40 staff at York College (*Eye* 996), is the equivalent of a P45.

The consultancy figured in a recent series of questions tabled to the Scottish parliament by Scottish Nationalist MSP Fergus Ewing. These concerned the troubled financial situation at Inverness College, and one of the matters he wanted clarified was "the cost of a consultancy report by Ben Johnston [sic] Hill of Nottingham on the college's financial position".

Inverness College's financial position was much influenced by Janet Price, principal from 1995 to 1998 (*Eye* 996). When she arrived the accounts were in the black. When she was forced out by a vote of no confidence three years later she left a £3.8m deficit which has since climbed to £4m.

Last spring Dr Graham Clark was brought in to try to reduce the debt created by Price's programme of mass redundancies which, instead of cutting costs, lumbered the college with a huge pay off bill.

Ben Johnson Hill's financial report, the cost of which remains undisclosed, has helped Dr Clark reach a solution. He has introduced a programme of, er, mass redundancies and sacked 15 full-time lecturers.

THE academic committee of University College London has been putting its time to good use.

It has written to all staff, warning them that the college's more sensitive souls may be offended by such outdated terms as "forefathers", "housewife", "cleaning lady" and "tax man".

What students are to do if they fall victim to such oppressively horrid words during academic research is not made clear.

EYE TV

BBC Annual Report And Accounts (BBC Books)

MOTHERS of the past used to believe that cod-liver oil and other nutritional supplements could be hidden in food. Children, though, would always detect the medicinal presence and spit it out.

The BBC now claims to have the same problem. The Reithian equivalent of cod-liver oil dripped into mashed potato is a scheduling trick known as "hammocking". A serious documentary is strung between two sitcoms or a news bulletin between two movies. Lured by the populist, the viewer stays for the solemn.

As widely reported from the Banff television festival, DG Greg's most brilliant underling – Mark Thompson – has jumped out of the hammock. He's dedicated the BBC to "streaming" or "generic scheduling". The reasoning is that multi-channel digital systems – which all homes will use within a decade – group channels by type rather than reputation. Sky News, CNN, CNBC, News 24 under a news banner; Nickelodeon, Disney and others in a list for kids.

In this scenario BBC1 and BBC2 might find themselves at the bottom of a set of 400 channels being offered. This tendency will be increased by the impending "electronic programme guide" which encourages the viewer to become their own scheduler, again by genre rather than individual programme. So Thompson has proposed that BBC1 would become an entertainment channel while BBC2 takes the current affairs, documentaries and arts.

Thompson's argument is more subtle and complicated than has been widely allowed, but let's consider first the conservative opposition. Traditional BBC viewers – the over-40 middle-classes who would probably still pick the Beeb from a multi-channel digital gateway – view this as surreptitious dumbing-down.

Certainly the moving of established programmes to new slots or channels has frequently been a cynical tactic by executives. It's known in the trade as "selling ice-cream in December". Cornettos are vanishing fast on the sand in July. But, when the stall gets a licence for winters only, takings fall dramatically. "There's simply no demand for it!" shout the owners of the beach, explaining that henceforth no ice-cream will be sold at all.

The obvious risk is that BBC2 would become the December ice-cream channel, a useful way of getting rid of genres which the BBC no longer wants to make. In the last five years, the success of shows has often been judged by dividing the budget by the audience to calculate a cost per viewer or listener.

Greg Dyke has dropped this practice – in appearances promoting the annual report, he never mentioned cost or ratings – but he needs to explain how he will decide if a programme is effective. Would *Panorama* be allowed the same budgets if its audience quarters? Or would it be quietly ditched as an unsold Cornetto on a freezing beach?

The opposite view is that Thompson realises that BBC loyalists are only a small and ageing section of the audience. Research suggests that digital and satellite homes do select viewing differently. They watch a sports channel for football, a kid's network for the children. And – the pro-Thompson argument goes on – it is ridiculous to see this as a philistine approach to broadcasting. The broadcasting services most loved by Middle England – Radio 3, Radio 4 – are genre-based. BBC Radio has been streaming since at least the 1960s.

This sounds convincing but there are two problems. The first is that the Banff address was careful to pull back from the full implications of its argument. If generic scheduling really is the future, then the changes would have to go far beyond BBC1 taking more entertainment and BBC2 having all the heavy docs. Under Thompson's apocalyptic vision, two channels with numbers after their name still wouldn't show in a digital gateway. The only answer would be dozens of small channels: BBC News, BBC Arts, BBC Science.

And the only logical way of selling this would be through subscription. The best defence of the licence fee is the variety of services it funds. All the BBC's recent ads make this point: a hundred knicker a year for all of this! Once you send your viewers and listeners off into smaller pens, they find the rent expensive.

In the 1990s, American economists began to float the idea of "dedicated tax funds". The voter would be told tax was going up but the money would be spent only on education or medicine or whatever. The idea collapsed because it was realised that taxpayers would seek to opt out of the other funds – defence, diplomatic hospitality, senate pensions – which they didn't use or didn't want. Exactly the same problem would arise in paying for generic channels through a licence fee.

Perhaps, though Greg and Thommo dare not yet say it, the licence fee has been given up as lost and the future is assumed to be subscription. But would a generation encouraged to view the BBC as a cornucopia cough up so willingly for individual brands? No one, though, should see the Banff address as just a cunning way of getting quality stuff off BBC. For the first time, senior executives were beginning to acknowledge that the BBC may not survive. No mashed potato can disguise that taste.

'Square Eyes'

Number crunchings

£130,000
Turnover of John Birt Productions, the company set up by Birt to process his salary for tax reasons, in 1986/1987, his first year as BBC Director General

£1,300,000
Total payments made by the BBC to Birt in 1999/00, his final year as director General, including salary, bonus, termination payment and pension

That's a 1000% pay rise in 5 years.

MEDIA NEWS

WHEN John Birt retires he takes away £1,300,000. When 20 television news editors retired after toiling for 30 years apiece at the Beeb, they asked their twentysomething boss if there might be "something in the kitty" for a farewell lunch.

"You're rich enough. Buy your own f*****g lunch", came the warm and comradely reply.

Greg Dyke's office was promptly deluged with indignant complaints about the incident. The result was that each retiring editor received a personal letter of appreciation and good wishes from the new director-general, and the manner of the twentysomething towards his more mature subordinates took a distinct turn for the better.

But, yes, they still had to pay for their own f*****g lunch.

THE latest accounts from the BBC note that World Service boss Mark Byford was given an interest free loan of £245 to buy a rail season ticket when he joined the Beeb's executive committee in December 1998.

This has now been repaid; but it is unclear why Byford, who will earn £238,000 this year, could not afford to pay for the travel card himself.

GOING LIVE

CONTINUING the series dedicated to pointless moments when TV news "goes live" to a reporter with nothing to report.

Last Wednesday ITN put Libby Wiener on the spot outside Windsor Castle where nothing was happening. "I understand Charles was able to wish his son happy birthday," she told a stunned nation.

THE Dyke revolution is affecting BBC Scotland in unexpected ways, say angry hacks who expected managers to be axed rather than programme makers.

Colin Cameron, the "genius" behind *Castaway 2000*, has just announced that no fewer than 15 producers are to be flung into the wilderness themselves, thanks to the sack. The ratio of "made in Scotland" programmes to "made elsewhere and bought for ninepence" ones will change accordingly.

Meanwhile redundant producers looking for work in *Ariel*, the BBC propaganda sheet, will not be encouraged. Last issue carried four production posts alongside 43 in "Business Support and Management" – including assistant financial accountants, assistant management accountants, marketing executives, finance managers and planning assistants.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

RIGHT JEZ, I'VE GOT THE LATVIAN GOAT CHEESE DIP AND THE VEGAN HUMOUS
YES, AND I'VE GOT THE CUMQUAT JUS AND FRESHLY PRESSED CRANBERRY SMOOTHIES
DON'T YOU JUST LOVE A GOOD PIG-OUT AT THE CINEMA...
NOW SHOWING:
ZBIGNIEV'S CONUNDRUM (U)
COMING SOON:
ANATOLIAN SEASON
SEFTON
POP CORN

"LYNAM trims Lineker's BBC lead", thundered the *Times* after England beat Germany in Euro 2000, claiming that "Lynam, who defected from ITV last year, was able to narrow the traditional gap in viewing figures when both channels simultaneously screen top football matches."

The paper went on to allege that Desmond Lynam's successor at the BBC, Gary Lineker, was worried that Lynam appeared to have taken so many viewers with him to ITV. This was based on the news that 11.8 million viewers watched the England-Germany game on BBC1, while 6.1 million watched on ITV.

The *Times* compared this with the England-Germany game in Euro 96 when 17.5m watched on BBC1 and 6.3m tuned-in to ITV. Which to anyone with an abacus shows that the only thing the two channels achieved – with or without the help of St Des – was to lose 5.9 million allegedly football-crazy viewers between them.

SALLY JOCKSTRAP WRITES...

There were swaths of empty seats at the Stade du Pays in Charleroi on Saturday night where so-called England supporters should have been sitting for the tie against Germany.

— Oliver Holt, news, p5, the *Times*, 19 June

It was noticeable in the Stade du Pays in Charleroi on Saturday night that no empty seats had been created by the arrest of 800 so-called fans. I kept looking around for blocks of seats representing England's shame, but in vain, because England's shame hadn't bought tickets.

— Lynne Truss, sport, p14, the *Times*, 19 June

DUMB BRITAIN

ITV's daytime magazine show *This Morning*, mostly presented by Richard and Judy, includes a general knowledge quiz in which viewers are phoned at home and asked questions worth £1,000 each.

Some of the answers given perhaps reveal why producers are now forced to aim so low with their programme ideas.

***Q**: What kind of a creature is a halibut?*

A: A bird.

***Q**: Try again...*

A: A ferret.

***Q**: What is the Prince of Wales's Christian name?*

A: Er...

***Q**: Here's a clue... he was married to Diana.*

A: Er...

***Q**: It begins with a "C".*

A: No idea.

***Q**: Which American actor is married to Nicole Kidman?*

A: Forrest Gump.

AD NAUSEAM

UNLIKE Christmas, big football championships come but once every two years. But for the ad industry they're honey pots that have the bigwigs rubbing their hands in glee.

The prospect of ITV audiences in the tens of millions is appetising enough; but add to that a consumer profile that reads young, affluent, gobby males slumped on sofas from Wadham to Wapping, and – oh glory be! – perennially pissed, and you can probably see why the agencies are drooling. At last, the advert writers gets a chance to speak to people exactly like themselves.

So what have they come up with this time round? A cursory glance at the marathon breaks for the big games reveals a predictable array of cars, booze, computer games, DIY – yup, they know who they're after. First up are the now-ubiquitous "break bumpers", five-second televisual parasites that leech on to otherwise passable programming and try to convince you their brand "supports" (as opposed to "bankrolls") the production.

This year's offering comes from Carlsberg, whose cunning wheeze is to use "normal" people to recreate famous footballing moments, in a cod-realist urban Britain setting of car parks, playgrounds and the like. Normal people playing football is not exactly a brilliant leap of invention, neither is it original (football fans have long memories – AXA's FA cup cling-ons were much the same, except better).

Other highlights include the usual battle of the sports companies, which involves German giant Adidas flexing its marketing muscles against Nike, the US behemoth. War is waged following a predictable pattern: one or the other company buys up the opening 30-seconds of the break (costing a mere £300,000 for the England v. Portugal game: underpaid Chinese workers eat your heart out) and then fills it with whatever is this year's take on the message "We are sport, you cannot function without us." It may have passed the money-men by that the first break is also the one where most of Britain piles off to the loo or to have a brew. More money down the toilet.

Nike's current tactic is to show clips of its last ad being filmed, to prove that its roster of megastars really can perform truly incredible feats with a ball. One would hope they can, given the amount of money they are paid to endorse the iconic swoosh. The ad from which this backstage baloney hails was an elaborate, yet redundant rehash of the classic Cantona "Au revoir" good vs. evil spot. Could it be that they went so over budget on that all-action epic they had to cobble together some out-takes, sans special effects, and fob us off?

Worst of all is Nationwide. Messrs Ferdinand, Redknapp and Owen sit on a sofa and read duff scripts in the standard footballer's automaton drone explaining how they are more concerned about their Nationwide current account than taking a penalty. This is implausible – not least because they all earn more than £20,000 a week so probably couldn't give two hoots about the state of their bank balance. Add that questionable premise to a horribly see-through tack-on to Nationwide's sponsorship of the England team, and you have yourself an almighty turkey, worth seeing only for the pleasing irony that both Ferdinand and Redknapp were subsequently left at home. Perhaps Keegan saw the rough cuts and did us all a favour.

Pseuds Corner

Lord Rothschild's invitation to see his new carpet-bedding at Waddesdon Manor on its hilltop in Buckinghamshire was doubly welcome.

PAUL JOHNSON
The Spectator

The twinkling of the pearl is the whole point of Vermeer. The whole painting [Girl with a Pearl Earring] is leading to this moment, the way the whole of football leads to the overhead goal of Van Basten.

RUDI FUCHS
Daily Telegraph

A lecturer has published a book with only blank pages. Anne Lydiatt, 52, who teaches fine art at Nottingham University, said Lost For Words *was intended to be "feminine space where there is silence".*

Metro

I don't think that many female writers write about the interplay of personal relationships within complex political structures. In fact, I might say it's just me.

LINDA GRANT (Orange Fiction Winner)
The Times

He is, it turns out, fascinated by space, and would very much like to travel to Mars. "It's the new Australia," he says. "It took five months to get there not so long ago." He is wonderfully and magically childlike in his curiosity. He currently, he says, has a 'craving' for maths. Do you get logarithms? I ask. Does anybody? "I've been reading about them, actually. A logarithm's only a differential that enables you to do mulitplication by adding." He likes to watch Learning Zone on the TV. "The Learning Zone is great. It's not trying to tell you anything. It's like communist telly." He particularly likes programmes on spirals. And triangles. And circles. "A circle is a very sophisticated thing. It's a very elegant thing, completely indescribable. Pi is an unknowable quantity. I think about circles a lot."

DEBORAH ROSS, interviewing
ALEX JAMES of Blur,
Independent

Co-curator Emily Campbell's title for her introduction to the book which accompanies the exhibition is "Knicker Nation". She suggests that underwear in the UK is different from everyone else's. Campbell reckons those sexy Italians go in for underwear "which is very ladylike and very de luxe, while French underwear, even though it has a whiff of adultery, is much more about decorum than sex." UK underwear, on the other hand, she says, "abets exhibitonism, a kind of native revelry, personal, aesthetic and semiotic."

Times Weekend

Every time a baby is born, so is a grandmother.

Little, Brown autumn catalogue entry for
The Virago Book of Grandmothers

I did feel a loyalty to Maxwell, and a certain affection for him. He was larger than life, a pre-moral figure, a kind of woolly mammoth stalking through the primeval forests unaware of the kind of things other people fussed about as being good or evil. But what he was not was a crook. Clearly in the last 18 months of his life, after I had gone, something happened which drove him to the most outrageous conduct, for which no possible extenuation can be given.

PETER JAY
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Strobes, J. James, Rosie Brown, Paul Ashton, Dave Rogers, Mrs J.R. Oddy, Strobes, Everyone.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Mistress Quietly

Sir,

I feel that the "joke" on the front of Eye 1004 wasn't a very tasteful one. Although Camilla Parker Bowles has been Charles' mistress for some time now, she has in fact kept her mouth shut about it. At least grant her some privacy for her silence and leave her alone.

Yours faithfully,
MISS N. JOHNSON,

Ilminster, Somerset.

Crowning glory

Sir,

It may of course be a deliberate mishtake on your part, but the crowns on the (highly amusing) front cover of the Historic Meeting Souvenir number are those of Brenda's Dad, G-G-G-G-G-G-G-Georgie.

Pedantically yours,
NIGEL BEWLEY,

Via e-mail.

PS: I prefer the Director's Cut version.

Lookalike

Mrs Tweedy

Mr Weedy

Sir,

Is Tony Blair by chance related to the Chicken Run's evil Mrs Tweedy?

Regards,
JONATHAN COBB,

Manchester.

Zeebrugge disaster

Sir,

It is amazing to think that whilst hundreds of Belgian police were tear-gassing mostly innocent English diners in a Belgian restaurant, 58 people were being slowly murdered by suffocation at Zeebrugge right under the noses of the Belgian police. I daresay that this was another batch of undesirables they didn't want in their clinical country and packed them off to Britain on the first available ferry.

Yours,
G.A. MANNION,

Via e-mail.

Carol singer

Sir,

Your cartoon strip was cruel. I do think Carol Vorderman could sometimes be a deal more discerning in the products she advertises. But she did start from nothing. And, having seen her only a couple of days ago recording Countdown, she is friendly, unpretentious, and sylph-like gorgeous — as I told her!

UNKNOWN,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike

Sting

Sting

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the remarkable similarity between Sting, the rock star who has campaigned fearlessly against global warming, deforestation, and the exploitation of animals by humans; and Sting, the rock star, who can now be seen on the television endorsing the Jaguar S-Type, which does fifteen miles to the gallon, and is finished in teak and finest leather.

Very best wishes,
RICHARD PETTINGER,

Littlestone, Kent.

Transporter-ed

Sir,

If by "Middlesborough" Piloti means Middlesbrough, I would point out that among the "little of interest" that the Victorian wild west city contains is Claes Oldenburg's only public sculpture in this country. There is also the Transporter Bridge, the largest of its type in the world, of which Pevsner remarks: "A European monument one is tempted to say... in its daring and finesse a thrill to see from anywhere." Worth a mention, surely.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN MYERS,

Hitchin, Herts.

Hot under the white collar

Sir,

I was entertained to read Slicker's comments on white collar crime being taken terribly seriously in America. In fact, of course, this is fantasy; there are many cases (eg, Boesky, as mentioned in the same piece) of derisory fines and negligible sentences. The same pictures applies to scientific fraud, military fraud, research fraud. Perhaps Slicker needs a caffeine pill and a few big books.

Regards,
RAE WEST,

Via e-mail.

Very snappy

Sir,

I know it's a crying shame to ruin your fantasies about my work as a photographer with a few facts, but hey, I'm going to try anyway.

The Eye article concerning me (1004) contained several serious factual errors.

For starters, pictures of Carol Vorderman taken at the popular British resort Forte Village in Sardinia were published in the Sunday Mirror not the People. But they've both got red mastheads so I suppose you were easily confused.

*But guess what else? The same pictures were also printed the day before in both the Daily Mail and The Sun **after** a discussion with Carol's agent, who raised no objection to their publication.*

Your "painstaking" analysis of my cuttings then moves on to a photograph of the "grieving Mick Jagger", published last month across the board after his mother's death.

Much thought was given to the publication and taking of this photograph, at Cannes Airport. Photographer, newspapers and magazines all felt that as Jerry Hall (also pictured next to Mick) was grinning from ear to ear the picture told a very different story to the one of wanton intrusion which the Eye unfairly suggests.

As for the pictures of Camilla Parker-Bowles on the beach, published on the front page of the Daily Mirror a short while ago, "enjoying what she thought was a private holiday in Mauritius"? I am touched by your sensitivity to the woman and her "private" moments.

And I am sure readers of the Eye were similarly moved. Because the same edition of the magazine carried a picture of Camilla on the cover complete with "comedy" speech bubble telling the Queen: "I sleep with your son".

Touching stuff.

I'd like to pose one final question for your readers, because I'm sure you won't be posing it yourself. Of all the hundreds of public figures I've photographed, how many do you think have complained to the PCC?

Er... none.

Funny that.

Yours at a "respectful distance",
JASON FRASER,

London SW7.

1.25 Live And Dangerous: European Seniors Tour Golf 7417281 *Time Out*

LUVVIES

Unbridled criticism affects your life. Forever. It becomes a part of the pattern that designs the fabric of your suffering. The torturer and the tortured, married in painful redefinition, marking indelibly the way you live and die, the way you perform your art.

DONALD SUTHERLAND
The Times

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

Black mark

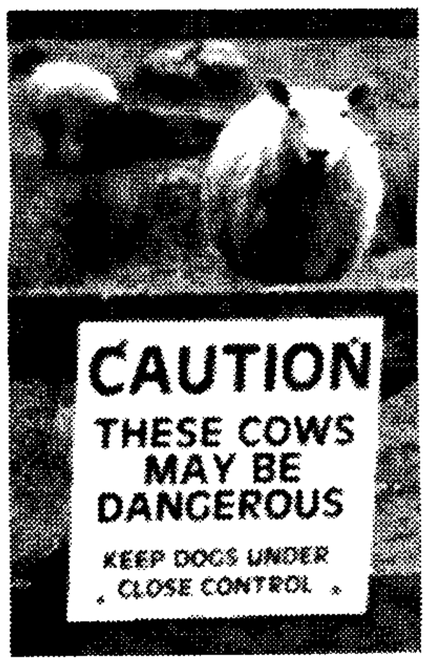
Sir,

Re: Right of reply? When Matthew Taylor worked at Millbank (HP Sauce, last Eye) he epitomised the courtesy and inclusiveness of New Labour, and its respect for ordinary members. I am therefore deeply honoured by his compliments as reported in your esteemed organ.

I can assure Matthew that I will continue representing mainstream opinion on the National Executive Committee. I will also wholeheartedly support Tony Robinson in cleaning up internal elections, though as we both won NEC places obviously not everything is fixed. Yet.

Yours fraternally,
ANN BLACK,

Labour Party National Executive Committee member-elect.



I-SPY

Lake District.

Submitted by Dr Nick Stafford.

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Who gives a fook

Sir,

As a Yorkshireman, I would quarrel with Don Howe's complaint about the Whingeing Nasal Southerners' use of "oo" to represent the "U" in John Prescott's pronunciation (Eye 1004). This is a perfectly valid representation of the sound, as in "look". I strongly suspect that Mr Howe's problem comes from his Liverpudlian pronunciation, which renders "look" as "Luke".

RICHARD BYWATER,

Worcester.

PS: I have to confess that, under extremest provocation, I have been known to tell my wife, who is a Liverpudlian, to "Fuke off".

Photo opportunity

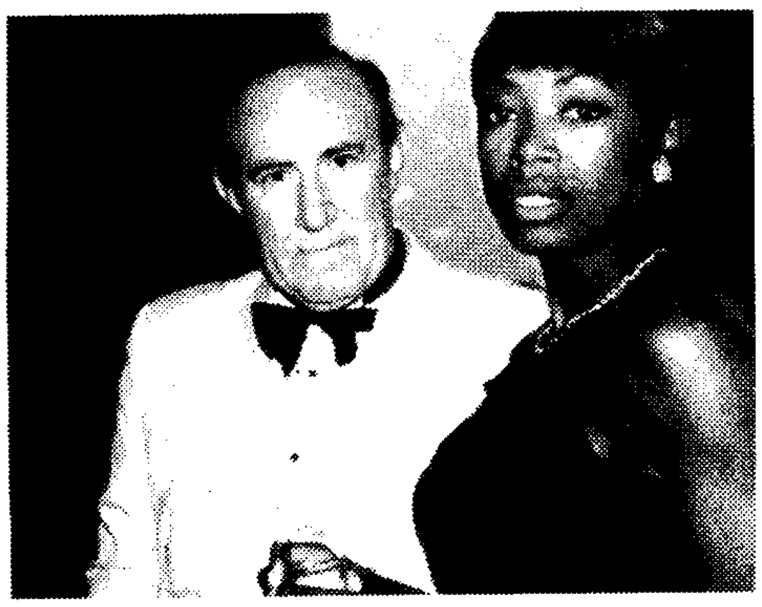
Sir,

In your article "Bit of a Boo-Boo" (Eye 1004), you mention a conference at Grosvenor House in London, at which one Mr Andrew Neill was due to speak about "Talent management... how he and his company have coped with the talent issue".

Sadly, I missed the conference. I wonder if you would have any articles or, better still, photographs, of Mr Neill "managing" any of the aforementioned "talent". Perhaps if you could reprint them, we would all be able to learn from his techniques.

Yours sincerely,
GRAHAM REDWOOD,

London SE13.



B. Ching sidetracked?

Sir,

Dr B. Ching is absolutely wrong to even suggest that Virgin is making rail tickets unaffordable without investing a penny in ATP (Eye, June 2nd).

Virgin is investing over £2.8 billion in new trains for our West Coast and CrossCountry rail franchises. These will be amongst the first train fleets in the UK to be completely fitted with Train Protection Warning System (TPWS). They will then be upgraded to the full automatic train protection system in 2005 when the necessary infrastructure equipment has been installed by Railtrack. The trains are now being built with provision to allow ATP equipment to be retro-fitted into the driving cab.

Kind regards,
CHRIS GREEN,

Chief Executive, Virgin Trains.

Pooh-poohing

Sir,

Re: the I-Spy column in Eye 1004. I think somebody was having you on! The picture to which I refer is the one featuring Netherton 4m, Trewhitt 3m, and ***Shitter ¾.***

I recognised the place names instantly as I have family in the area and my mother lived at ***Snitter*** *for some years. As children we used to laugh at the name but mother thought it a perfectly good name. I suggest that somebody had been fooling around with the wording on the signpost. I can't imagine any local authority allowing that defacement to remain for very long.*

For your information, the three places mentioned are a few miles north-west of Rothbury in Northumberland.

Yours sincerely,
MRS SHEILA M. RYLE,

Maidenhead, Berks.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The tide is very much in our court now."
KEVIN KEEGAN
(Paul McAuley)

"There's a little triangle – five left-footed players."
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(Paul Harrop)

"We have spent three matches chasing a football."
KEVIN KEEGAN, Soccernet
(Pedro Wrobel)

"Two-nil was a dangerous lead to have..."
PETER BEARDSLEY, ITV
(John Richards)

"As the seconds tick down, Belgium are literally playing in time that doesn't exist."
Commentator, ITV
(Bernard Hughes)

"A smoked salmon sandwich of a football match if ever there has been one."
PETER DRURY, ITV
(Mark Herron)

"There's a slight doubt about only one player, and that's Tony Adams, who definitely won't be playing tomorrow."
KEVIN KEEGAN
(Brian Jones)

Letter from **Phnom Penh**
from Our Own Correspondent

OUR war has been over for some time, but in Cambodia we still wonder what kind of peace we have and who are the beneficiaries. Forests are being destroyed, while land cleared of mines is handed over to the well-connected for plantations. Pledges to clean up corruption and illegal logging appear to have hoodwinked foreign donors, who last month offered us $500m aid. But on the ground things seem a little different.

Take some of the foreign businesses that are coming in to try to revive our economy. Some weeks back we were visited by none other than your own Egyptian shopkeeper, Mohamed Fayed. He turned up with Mrs Chavalit, wife of Thailand's former prime minister and well-known in the illegal logging industry, to secure rights to drill for oil next to Tonle Sap, our largest lake and the world's biggest inland fishery that provides 70 percent of our people's protein needs.

Mr Fayed already has an unorthodox portfolio of oil interests through Harrods Energy, a low-profile company that has oil concessions in Libya and Thailand. Here he met Hun Sen, our prime minister and former Khmer Rouge officer, and Sok An, his fabulously rich and corpulent deputy, whose name appears on a stack of interesting contracts that signed away our forests to foreign companies.

The deal seems to have been done, with Te Duong Dara, director of the National Petroleum Authority, declaring himself satisfied that Harrods Energy, hardly a household name in the business of exploration and development, was just the outfit to develop our nascent oil industry. The phoney pharaoh bragged to one of our ministers what he was going to do for Cambodia but seemed distinctly short on detail. "If he was coming here to open a department store, I would have listened more carefully," said one official.

One thing with which he probably will not have to concern himself too much is what do if things go wrong. An oil spill in Tonle Sap would be an environmental and food supply disaster. But if recent indications are anything to go by, the culprit would probably emerge unscathed. When a Taiwanese company dumped mercury-contaminated waste in our southern port of Sihoukanville, the only people to be arrested were a couple of human rights workers. The senior official who signed the deal in the first place was not investigated, nor were allegations that he had received fat backhanders.

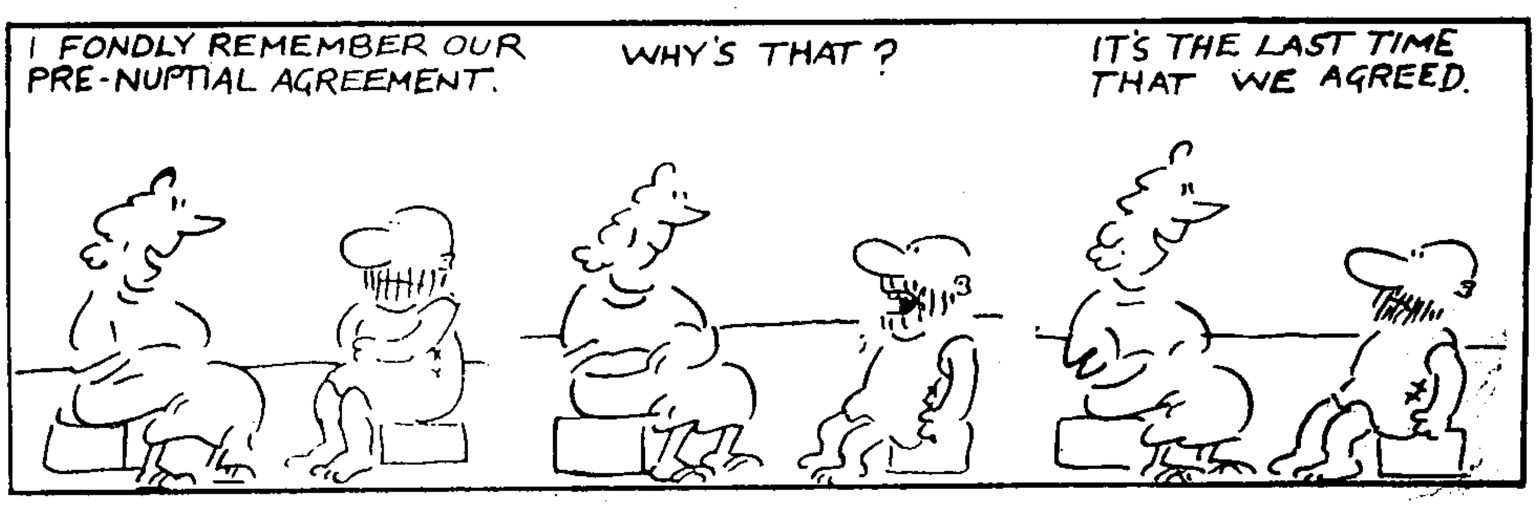
In the forestry sector figures for 1997-98 show that $184m, around half our annual budget, disappeared after our esteemed leaders had cut deals with foreign contractors. In on the gravy train are Ieng Sary, Khieu Sampan and Nuon Chea, the surviving architects of the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s, who live it up in fabulous villas financed by the dubious dealings the authorities ignore. At this rate, our forests will be commercially logged out within three years.

Oil and gas had proved a boon for many of our neighbours. Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia have secured millions in foreign investment, thousands of jobs and a huge boost for foreign exchange earnings. But they settled on some of the industry's more conventional players rather than an offshoot of a London department store.

We fear we know only too well why our government has chosen Mr Fayed, and it is not because of his prowess in the energy game. We've already lost our land. Now we fear that we may lose what is underneath it, and in the process poison what is in our water. Our leaders seem happy to take our cut, and it is no comfort at all that our friends abroad seem ready to do so little to persuade them otherwise.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

o "What is wrong with us wanting to keep our beloved mother in a freezer?" Michel and Joelle Leroy asked a Bordeaux court, as they appealed against a ruling which insisted that she be either buried or cremated. "We were always a very close family, and she told us before she died that she wanted to stay close to us forever. And where could be closer than in our own home?

"She always loved the kitchen, and the glass-topped freezer in our pantry fits her perfectly. She has been lying there peacefully now for five months, and she looks no different now from the day she died. Lenin lay in state for sixty years, and he wasn't even frozen, so why can't we keep her, as long as she stays healthy? It's a four star model and the

manufacturers say on the freezer door that chicken and fish can be kept for two years without any deterioration, so can't we at least keep her until then? It's much easier for us to come to terms with her death, knowing that we can see her whenever we want. This is not a matter for the health authorities. It should be left in the hands of Jesus Christ and his disciples."

The court's decision is expected next month. *(Brisbane Courier Mail, 20/5/2000. Spotter: Norm Reynolds)*

— o —

o *"It's true that there's been a bit of a hiccup in our PR campaign for Heinz Salad Cream" admitted a company spokesman in London, "but we are not downhearted. However, it will sadly no longer be possible for us to demonstrate our claim that 'any food tastes supreme with Heinz Salad Cream' by getting a man to eat one of our advertising billboards."*

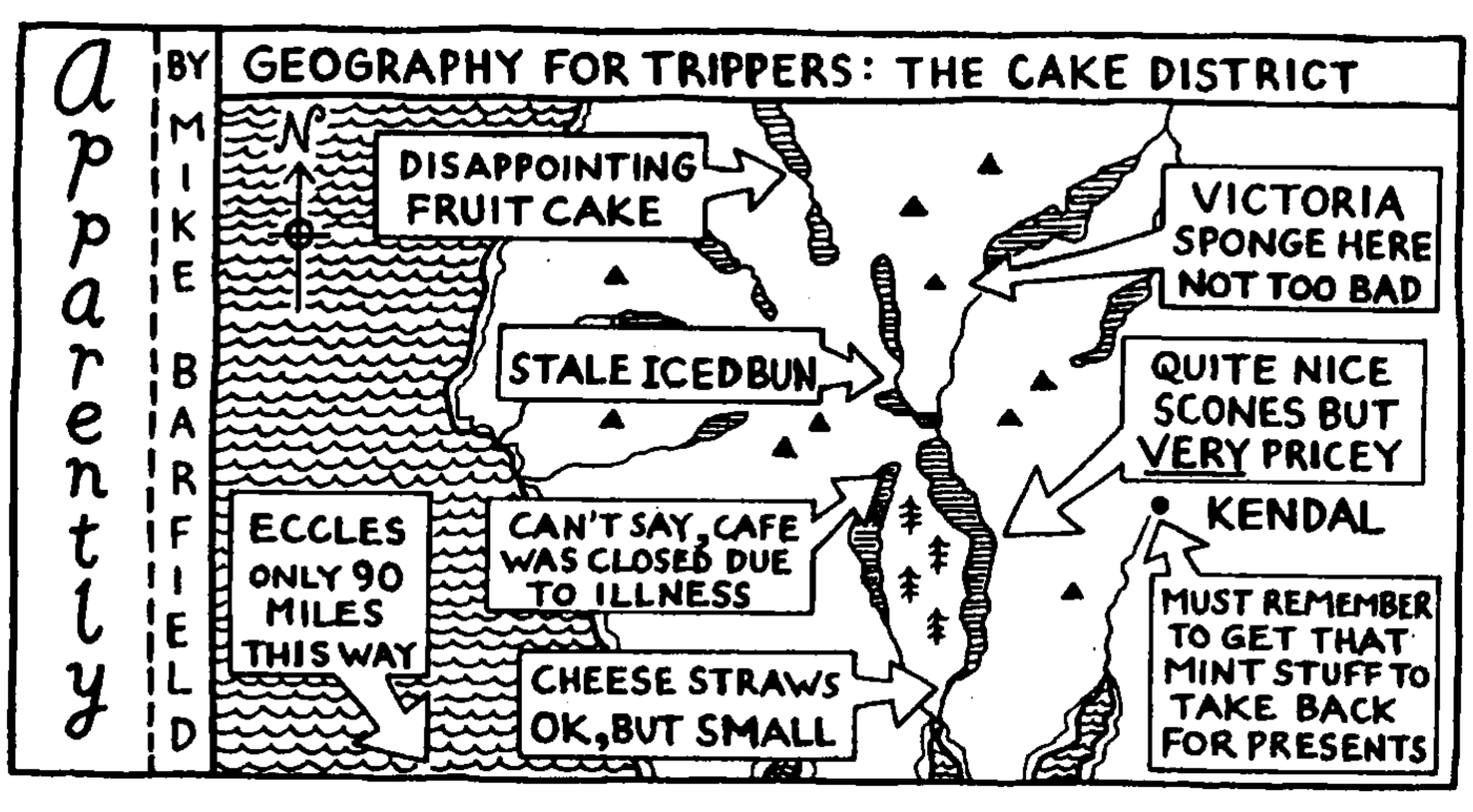
Earlier, the spokesman had outlined the problems faced by the publicity campaign. "At first, all went well. We earmarked a giant 96-sheet poster site in Cromwell Road, and the plan was that the billboard would be gradually eaten away, until all that remained was the Heinz salad cream logo and the slogan. To assist us, we hired the services of Mr Mangetout, a Frenchman from Grenoble. Mr Mangetout has already eaten a Cessna 150 light aircraft, several bicycles, tv sets, shopping trollies, and various other objects, and he assured us that he could devour the billboard in two weeks, wood, steel, and all. He said he'd eat it for two hours each morning, and another two in the evening.

"So we put up the poster, but unfortunately Mr Mangetout contracted food poisoning on the night before the stunt was to begin. The poster is still up in Cromwell Road, but Mr Mangetout is still in hospital, and we couldn't find anyone else willing to eat the billboard. He is unrivalled in his field, you see, so under the circumstances we've had to abandon the idea." (Marketing, 4/5/2000. Spotter: Paul Raybould)

— o —

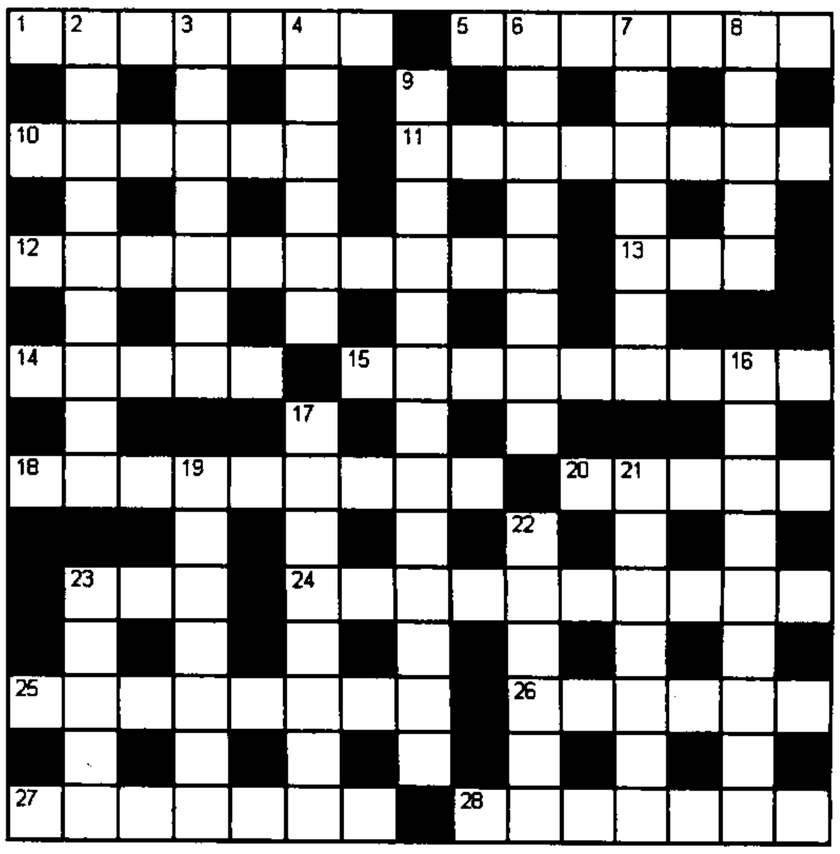
o "This was an unfortunate accident," Governor Andres Gonzalez told reporters in Cundinamarca, Colombia, "but it will not weaken my resolve. Survival certificates are essential in our fight against corruption, and I am not abandoning the system just because a few old people die while trying to get them. I flush letters of complaint from the victims' relatives down the toilet."

Governor Gonzalez was speaking after the death of Arturo Suspe, an eighty-seven-year-old former public works employee who had suffered a fatal heart attack while queueing in sweltering heat to collect a government 'survival certificate' which would prove that he was officially alive. "The survival certificates are a great success, because they are helping us to crack down on pension cheats, who claim money on behalf of dead people. But unfortunately, our bureaucracy is rather slow, and it usually takes several days of queueing before the certificate can finally be issued. And old people sometimes find it hard to queue all day in the heat, and sometimes they die. But look at it this way. Government expenditure on pensions has gone down by 30% since the certificates were introduced, and surely that can only be a good thing." *(Reuters, 8/6/2000. Spotter: Quentin.Smith)*


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
GEOGRAPHY FOR TRIPPERS: THE CAKE DISTRICT
DISAPPOINTING FRUIT CAKE
VICTORIA SPONGE HERE NOT TOO BAD
STALE ICEDBUN
QUITE NICE SCONES BUT VERY PRICEY
KENDAL
ECCLES ONLY 90 MILES THIS WAY
CAN'T SAY, CAFE WAS CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS
CHEESE STRAWS OK, BUT SMALL
MUST REMEMBER TO GET THAT MINT STUFF TO TAKE BACK FOR PRESENTS

EYE CROSSWORD 160

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Blunder made by No.10, maybe, in the air (5-2)
5 It's not pussy Pat's treated with ice (7)
10 As a royal, "one pulled" (6)
11 Charlie's game to penetrate an Italian girl as a form of defence of one's conduct (8)
12/22 Time to take spanner to this moving example of modern engineering! (10,6)
13 Crafty observation of a crank? (3)
14 Grotty bloke next to gutless bloke (5)
15 One drink with date results in celebrated engagement (9)
18 Perhaps Sir Trevor McDonald's heard rival late TV spot (9)
20 Punch's pointless, piss-poor pieces (5)
23 Seedy thing reportedly taken by a peer (3)
24 Having an erection for every set from 'Posh' (5-5)
25 The last men's bollocks (8)
26 Blair's barrackers embraced by cussed naturalist (6)
27 Don rather goes without kiss, love (7)
28 The country, full of bacteria, entraps one (7)

DOWN

2 Frank scoffed – but he didn't fare too well as one (9)
3 'Listener' insert with Brenda grabbing a bit of publicity (7)
4 Relax – university gets Brown finally on news (6)
6 Rumpus not unfamiliar in this parliament? (8)
7 It's academic: classy Mowlam's a scandalous politician! (7)
8 As one might say on entering old architect familiarly (5)
9 Making a mockery of transporting your urine sample? (6,3,4)
16 When MPs break Tony's heart, one enters a state of depression (9)
17 Hostile and vile turn-off (8)
19 Speaker might stand on this TV series package (7)
21 Devoted traveller left off contraceptive – ghastly (7)
22 (see 12)
23 Rubbished Europe endlessly like Hague? Well, no, actually (3-2)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 7.7.00. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 159

Winner: GUY HERBERT

ACROSS: 1 Shorts 5 Top-heavy 9 Body Zone 10 Oasis 11 Abel 12 Riot police 13 Sex aid 15 Screw you 17 Fellatio 19 Delays 20 Shopaholic 22 Arse 24 Diner 25 Cherokee 26 Two minds 27 Satire

DOWN: 2 H-bomb 3 Royal Mail 4 Scoured 5 The dogs bollocks 6 Prosper 7 Easel 8 Vasectomy 14 Eye-shadow 16 Walkabout 18 Teheran 19 Duchess 21 PanAm 23 Smear

TWO NEW ZONES FOR DOME

by Our Showbiz Staff **Cecil B. de Millennium**

TWO exciting new zones are to open shortly at the Greenwich Dome in a new plan to attract more visitors to the ailing theme park.

The first, the Bonus Zone, will show visitors members of the management team being given large cheques in recognition of their failure. A huge cheque, forty feet long, will illustrate the role of the bonus in Modern Britain and will be carried by members of the Railtrack Board of Directors, led by Lord Birt of the BBC.

Another zone will be called the Nepotism Zone, which will show a dramatic recreation of the way Mr Ben Evans (full name The Honourable Benedict Twistleton-Blackstone), the son of Labour Peer Baroness Blackstone of the LSE, was given the job of running the Dome by mummy's friend Peter Mandelson, even though he had no relevant experience or qualifications.

EVANS ABOVE!

Said a spokesman, "The new zones show what Britain is best at – rewarding failure and encouraging sleaze. We are confident that they will attract millions of people demanding that we close down the Dome immediately."

Zimbabwe Election Results

(continued from page 1)

Mugabe South (formerly Harare North)

Zanu-PF Elected

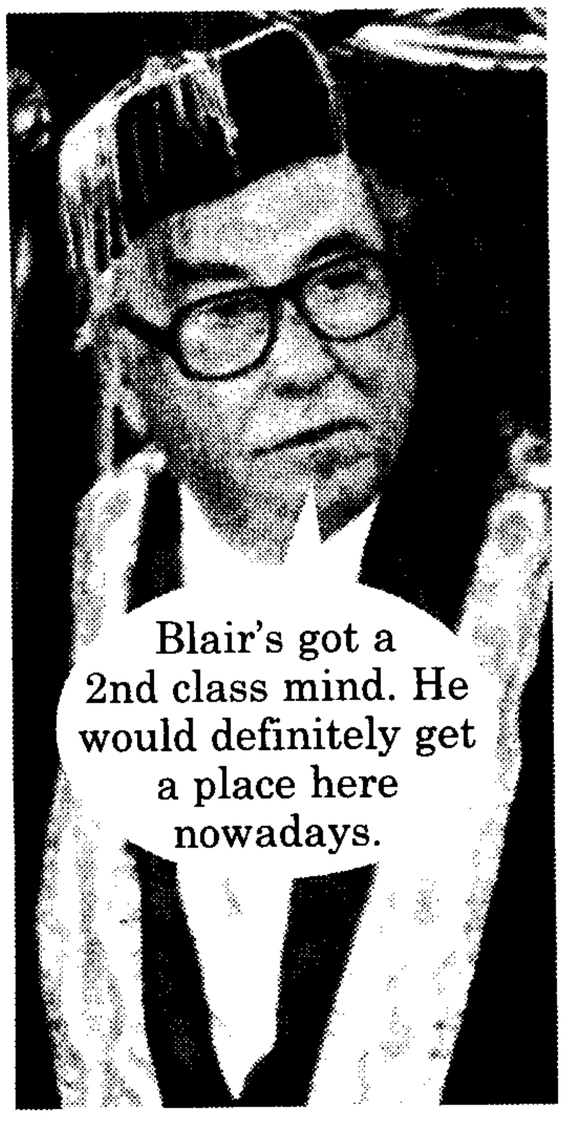
Mr Mbastard Machete (Zanu-PF) **3**;

Mr Aloysius Nhoper (MDC – Opposition Party) **7,317,402**.

Zanu Gain

100% swing to the Monster Raving Zanu Party of President Screaming Lord Mugabe.

OXFORD CHANCELLOR SPEAKS



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam David Tomlinson, Actor

So. Farewell
Then.
David Tomlinson.
Star of Mary
Poppins, Bedknobs and
Broomsticks and
Many other
Great films.

"Let's go fly
A kite up to
The Highest Height."
Yes, that was your
Catchphrase.

And
Where you
Are going
Now.

E.J. Thribb (with lump in throat) 17½

The Observer

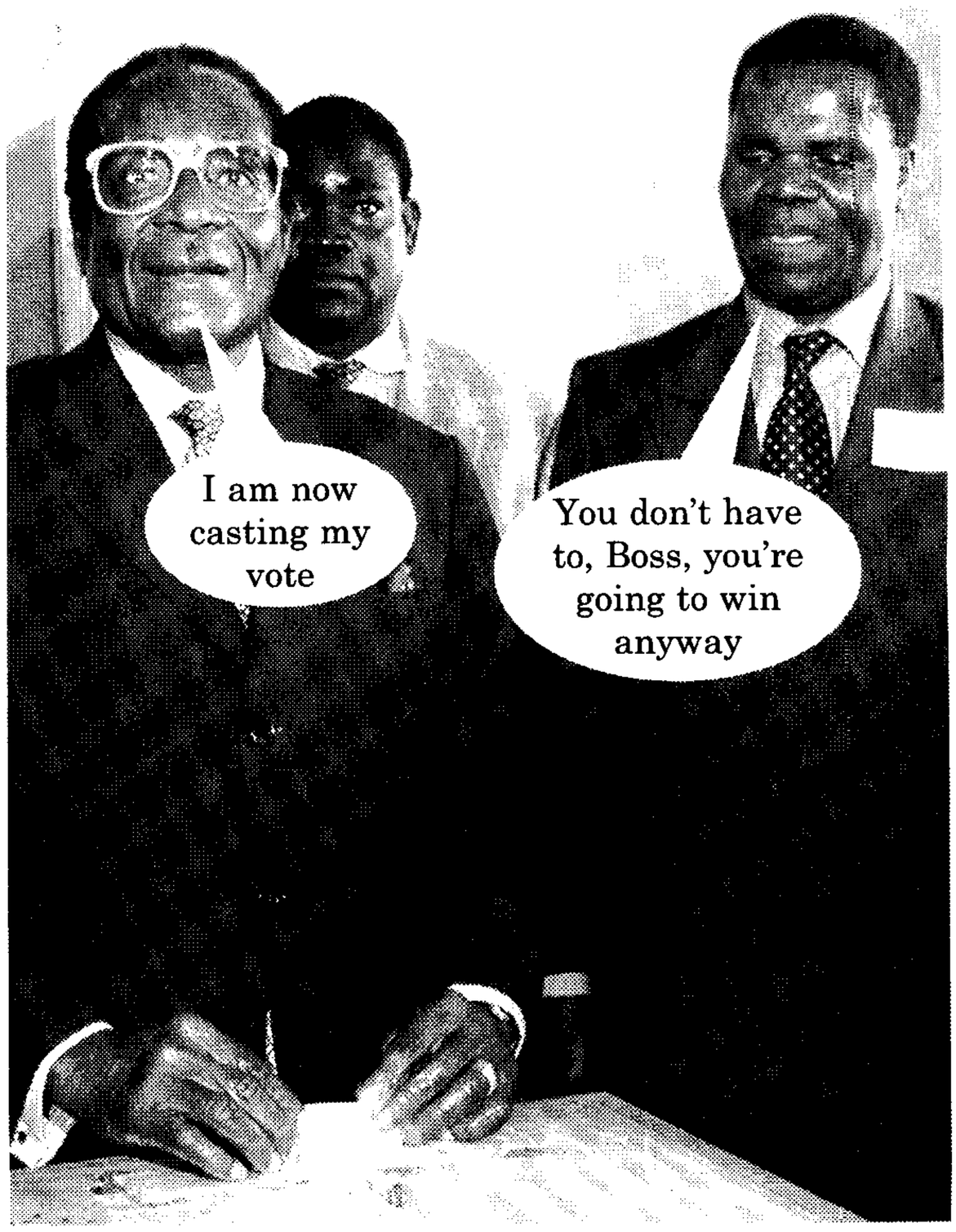
'Why Anthony Holden casts no spell over me'

by Harry Potter

WHAT is it about this third-rate author that newspaper editors find so appealing? Is it because his books don't sell in such large numbers? Is it all the hype about himself that they swallow? Or is it his old-fashioned obsession with the Royal Family (please!) and his plodding prose style that all these editors find so bewitching? Let's be honest, Holden is fine for children to read, but if one wants something a bit more grown-up, then Eastenders is the only *(cont. p. 94)*

© *McCrummy & Co, The Absurder.*

ZIMBABWE LATEST

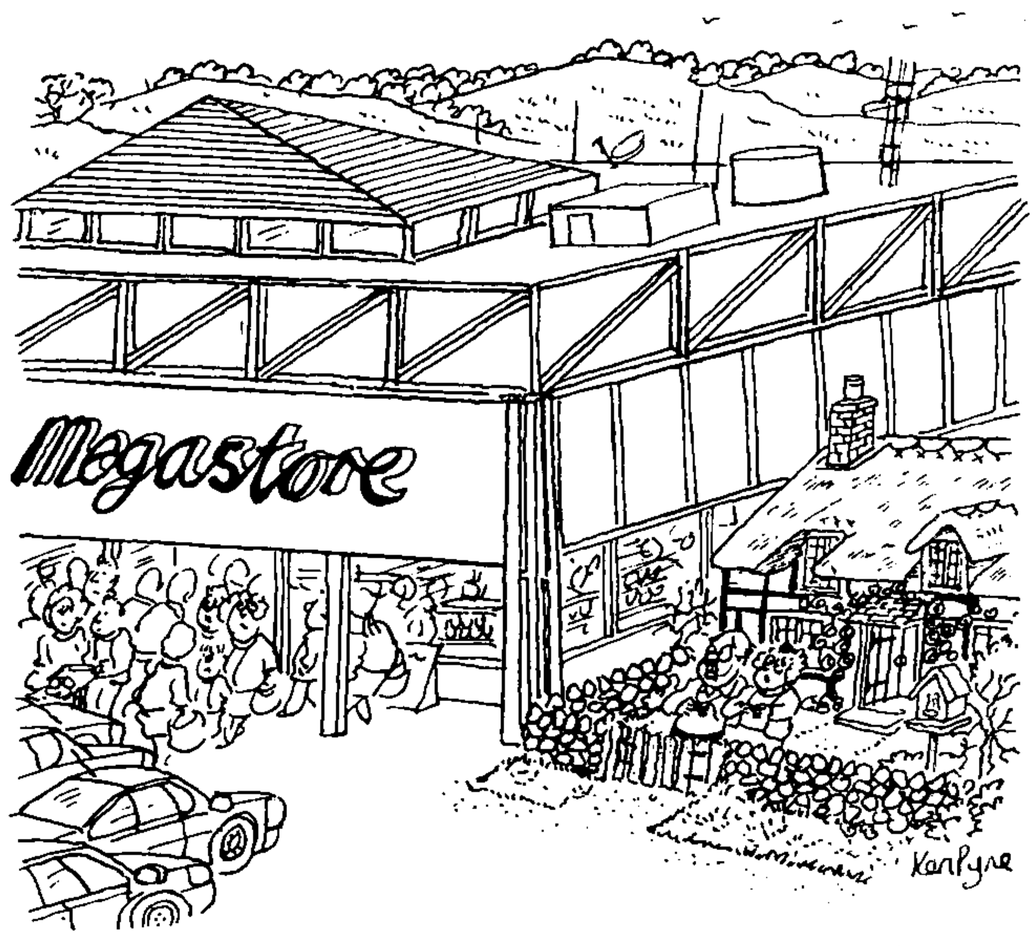


WIMBLEDON SIX TO WATCH

THESE six top-seeded strawberries are likely to go all the way.

Ranked at 99 pounds a punnet they were brought over from Yugoslavia and trained by top strawberry coach Jack Strawberry before being entered in this year's Wimbledon 2000 draw.

Although it's always possible that they will drop out in the early rounds, the smart money says *(That's enough six to watch. Ed.)*



"Well, it wasn't there when I put the cat out last night"

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Well, the one thing you won't be hearing anything about from me this week is the football!

Let's face it, it's just a game. And not one I personally take any interest in. But to hear the way some people go on and on about it, you'd think it was a religion!

Surely people have got more important things to think about than whether the St Albion's team lost last week solely because the silly Neville boy let everybody down by giving away a penalty in the last minute.

Of course, I was too busy preparing for the oecumenical conference in Portugal to watch the game myself, but from the moment the other side scored in the 20th minute I could see we were going to lose.

And you know, it's so easy to get these things out of proportion. Which is why a group of St Albion's supporters went and threw chairs through the window of Mr and Mrs Magritte's chocolate shop (Pralines Sont Nous) in the High Street.

I would like to offer an apology on behalf of our whole parish community to Mr and Mrs Rene Magritte for the mindless actions of a tiny and completely unrepresentative minority of our youth club members. And I can give them a solemn promise that this will not happen again since St Albion's are now, sadly, out of the Interparish 2000 competition.

So, enough of football! I'm not going to devote the whole of my letter to what is nothing more than a past-time, with its literal meaning of "passing the time".

And talking of "passing", I have to say that this was just one of the things which let us down so badly.

It was embarrassing for all of us who watched the game from start to finish to see just how badly our team was outplayed. Like it or not, a humiliation like this reflects badly on the whole parish and on its leadership, which means me.

Obviously, it is not my fault if the team loses. But, let's face it, if we had won, which is what we were all praying for at Evensong last Sunday, it would have made everyone feel better about themselves and the way the parish is going.

And, as for the hooligans, all I can say is that their disgraceful boorishness was even worse than the bad manners recently displayed by the so-called ladies of the St Albion's Women's Institute, many of whom, Mr Campbell

tells me, are fully paid-up members of extremist right-wing groups like the Townswomen's Guild.

So, as we look back on all these distressing recent events, let us remember that football is not just a game. It is a microcosm of life itself (which is why I have always been so keen on it!). We all play our part, whether on the field itself or in the stands, singing those much-loved old hymns, "Here We Go" and "Que Sera, Sera".

Yours,

(in the number 10 shirt of life!)

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Roy Jenkins who has been a loyal friend of the Vicar's for many years, but who has now repaid the Vicar's kindness and hospitality with an unforgivable and uncharitable attack, accusing the Vicar of having "a second-rate mind".

Help Roy to cope with his increasing senility and, of course, his tragic problem of over-consumption of claret. May he learn to come to terms with his own failure to become Vicar and accept his increasing obscurity with good grace.

T.B., MA Oxon – a real degree, Roy!

Parish Notices

St Albion's Weightwatchers will be meeting in the Church Hall on Tuesdays. Mrs Jowell will be helping any ladies who are having problems putting on weight. The first meeting will focus on "Cakes and Puddings" and our future themes include "Our Friend The Potato", "Are You Getting Enough Sugar?" and "Trust In The Lard".

Fatsheets available from Mrs Jowly's website thin-no-more@churchhall.co.uk

Millennium Tent update

From Jean-Claude Gerbil, Grand Directeur de la Tente Millenniale

Bonjour!

Et un grand remercie à notre cher ami Monsieur Heseltine (Tarzan de la jungle, comme vous dites!). Il a dit que la Tente est la plus populaire attraction dans le whole monde! Et c'est vrai! La Tente a already attracté plus de visiteurs than

- *Le Monte D'Everest*
- *Le Wreck du Titanic*
- *Le North Pole*
- *Le Lost Kingdom De L'Atlantis*
- *La Lune.*

Pour example, regardez cette charte:

Nombre de visiteurs à la lune cette semaine:	**0**
Nombre de visiteurs à la Tente:	**1**

Eh voilà! Sorted! Comme les young people disent!

J-CG

WARNING!

It has come to my notice that various younger and more impressionable members of our congregation have fallen under the spell of an undesirable American evangelist (Rev. Marvin O'Bushlicker, First Church of Christ The Free-Marketeer). Only those with no ideas and nothing in their heads (eg, Master Hague) would fall for this kind of nonsense. If young William is looking for a spiritual leader, perhaps I could direct him to a charismatic figure rather closer to home! T.B.

Parish Postbag

From Mrs Jay, Matron of the St Albion's People's Old Home (formerly Home For Distressed Gentlefolk)

Dear Vicar,

I am sick and tired of parishioners accusing me of lying about where I went to school. When I said I had been to the local grammar school, it was quite obvious that what I meant was that I attended the St Albion's High School for Young Ladies, where grammar played a central part in the English curriculum.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Margaret Jay

(née Callaghan)

P.S. The Editor reserves the right not to print any letters disagreeing with the above, particularly if they come from deranged inmates of the old folks' home, like Mr Normo Tebbs.

GOVERNMENT TO LAUNCH 'THIN CAMPAIGN'

by Our Media Staff **Jane Thynne**

THE Government last night announced a new drive to get "thin ideas" on to the front pages of newspapers and magazines.

"For too long," said spokesman for the Ministry of Women, Tessa Jowell, "the media have been obsessed with 'heavyweight' issues, expecting the government to come up with initiatives on the breakdown of the Northern Ireland ceasefire or the appalling mess in the NHS.

"What we need is some really thin stuff," she declared, "something terribly light and feeble instead of all those awful meaty problems that tend to dominate the news."

WILLIAM VOGUE

"That is why I have organised this Body Image Summit today in the hope of persuading the public that as a body, this government is a fat lot of good to *(cont. p.94)*

Asylum Seekers

AN APOLOGY

IN RECENT weeks, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given the mistaken impression that the asylum seekers flooding Britain were evil, scrounging, layabout criminals interested only in milking Britain's over-generous benefits system.

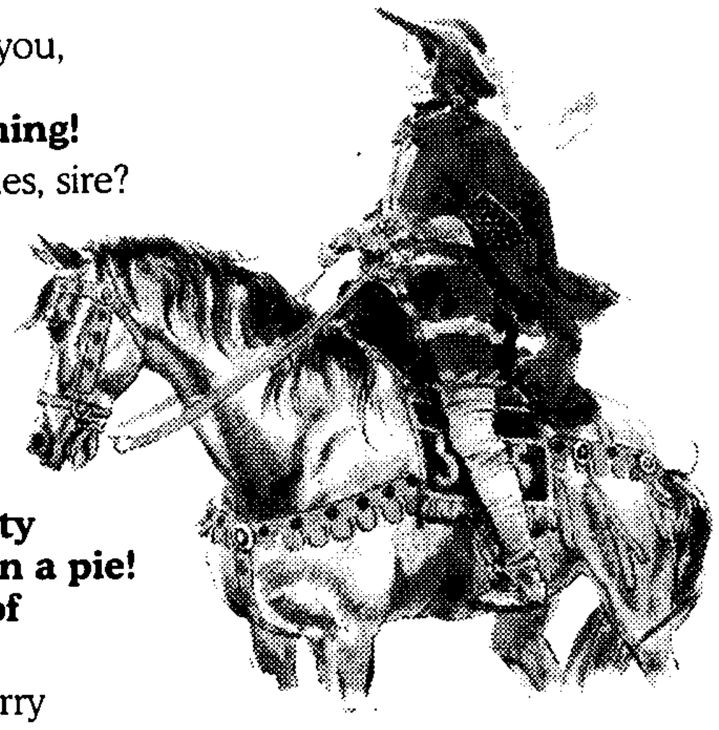
We now realise in the light of the story in which a number of asylum seekers were put into a big lorry and left there to die, that nothing could be further from the truth. They are in fact simple folk desperate to achieve a better life for themselves and their families and who've become tragic pawns in a racket by ruthless, organised criminal gangs who seek to profit from human misery.

We would like to apologise unreservedly for any confusion caused and for any further confusion in the future when, on discovering that another lorry-load of illegal immigrants has made it through Dover, we immediately label those aboard as evil, scrounging layabouts and criminals interested only in milking Britain's over-generous benefits system.

© All Newspapers

Nursery Times

Prince Charming at 18 – Your Questions Answered



1. How do we address you, Your Majesty?
   Just call me charming!
2. What are your hobbies, sire?
   I like being charming, turning on the charm and charming people.
3. Are you a good cook?
   You should taste my four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie! It's wicked! And, of course, charming.
4. Are you going to marry Snow Nose?
   I think you must mean Snow White, who is a good friend but no more than that.
5. What about the rumours concerning you and Cinderella Palmer-Tomkinson?
   "Snorters" and I are also just good friends.
6. Are you going to follow your father and join all the King's Horses and Men?
   I think I'll go to University first and read History of Charm, and then see how it works out.
7. Do you think you will live happily ever after?
   I've never really thought about it.

(Continued for 94 years)

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Mr Takeshita, former Prime Minister of Japan

So. Farewell then
Mr Takeshita,
Japanese politician
And the world's
Most famous
Anagram.

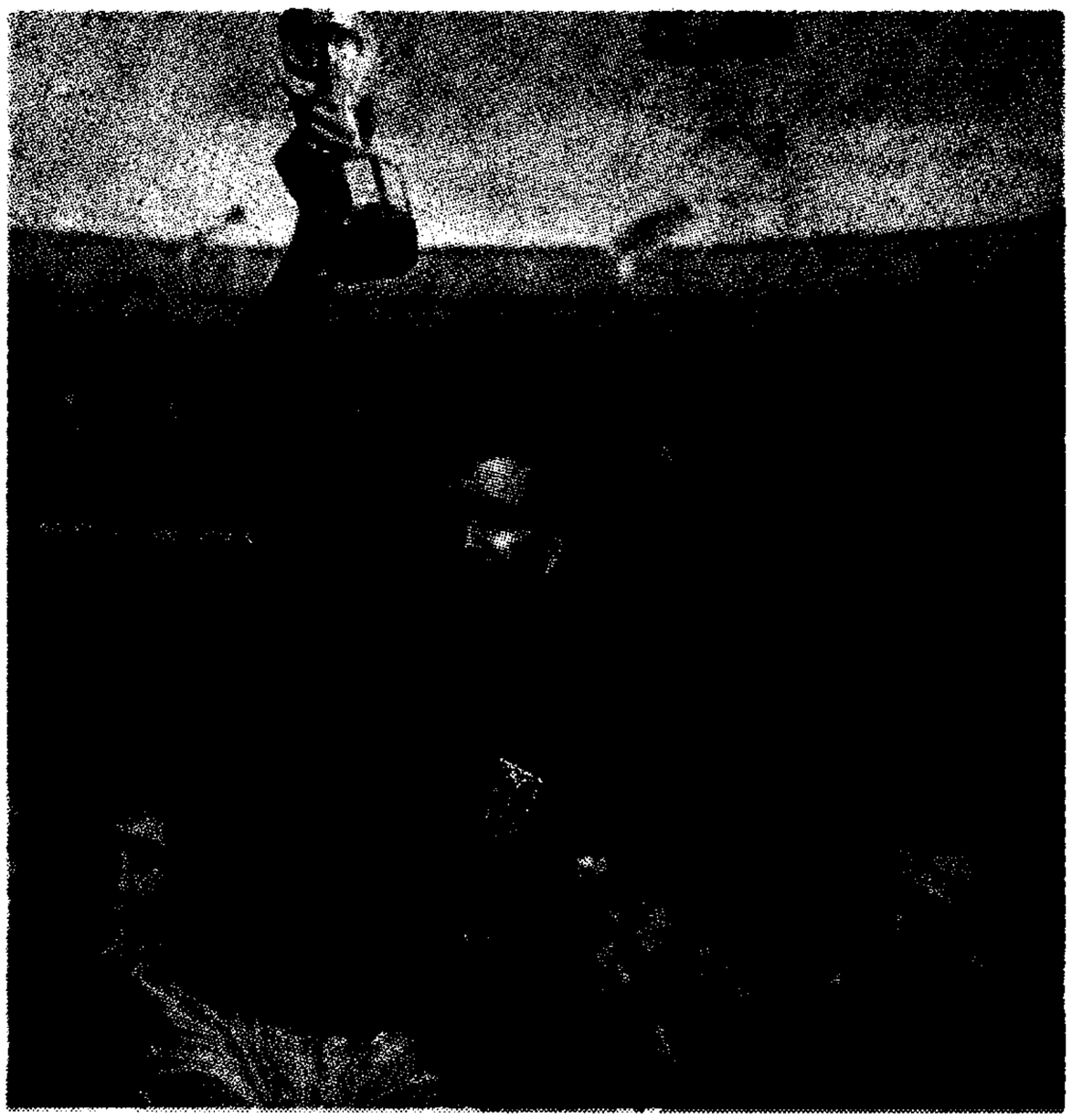
So. Farewell then also
To this joke
Which dies
With you.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

ASCOT
YOU MEAN WERE DUST?
HI! I'M ON THE TERRA-FIRMA!
I BACKED LABOUR!
I WAS IN THE BLITZ YOU KNOW
I'VE LOST MY SHIRT THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS LOSE YOUR KNICKERS!
YOU'D NEVER BELIVE SHE WAS 100% GIN
REMEMBER IF I CAN FIND A LOOPHOLE I DON'T PAY YOU
MIKE LEVY
GORDON BROWN HAS PUT TWENTY MILLIONS POUNDS OF OUR MONEY ON AN OUTSIDER!
ME TO WIN
FANCY A HOT-TIP DARLING ?
GET LOST YOU BUM!
I LOVE THE HAT
HIRST PAST THE POST-MODERN
DON'T FORGET I'VE GOT TO BE BACK IN THE NICK AT SIX
THE TIMES! I WAS HOPING FOR PAGE 3 OF THE SUN
IT'S £2000 A RIDE
WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR- A TAX SHELTER
THE VULGAR ENCLOSURE

"There we were, gentlemen, surrounded. Supply lines severed, minimal ordnance, 37% casualties, GHQ in chaos and a traumatic stress liaison unit nowhere to be seen!"



Eye Film Choice

Victory Over Germany

STIRRING tale of how the American football team won the World Cup in 1966, starring Mel Gibson as Captain Bob Moore Jr III who scored all four goals in the sensational 4-2 win over the hated English.

Also stars Tom Hanks as Nobby Stileburger and Julia Roberts as the team's cheerleader in love with Bobby Charleston (John Travolta).

ANOTHER APOLOGY

IN recent weeks, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given the impression that the England football team, under the inspired leadership of Mr Kevin Keegan, had the finest chance since 1966 of winning a major championship. Headlines such as "King Kev Can Do The Biz", "Shearer Magic Will Bring Home The Silver" and "Becksie's Blitzkrieg Will Win World War Four" may have led readers to believe that the England squad had some chance of coming in the first two in their group.

We now realise that the national team was without doubt the worst bunch of talentless no-hopers ever to don an England jersey, and that, in the words of Alf Littlejohn (Cab No. 94 with flag of St George obscuring the windscreen), "they should all be strung up, guv, it's the only language they understand".

We apologise unreservedly for any confusion that may have arisen from any previous articles by our sports team.

This apology first appeared in 1970, and has been reprinted every two years since that date.

EURO 2000

TRIUMPH FOR ENGLAND

by Our Man In Brussels
Lunchtime O'Sprout

AFTER a dazzling display of skill, skipper Tony Blair led home his team to be mobbed by no one at Heathrow Airport.

"We took on the Germans and won," said a tired but triumphant Blair. "After all these years of losing, it was a wonderful moment when the whistle blew and we were only 14-1 down."

SHEARER NONSENSE

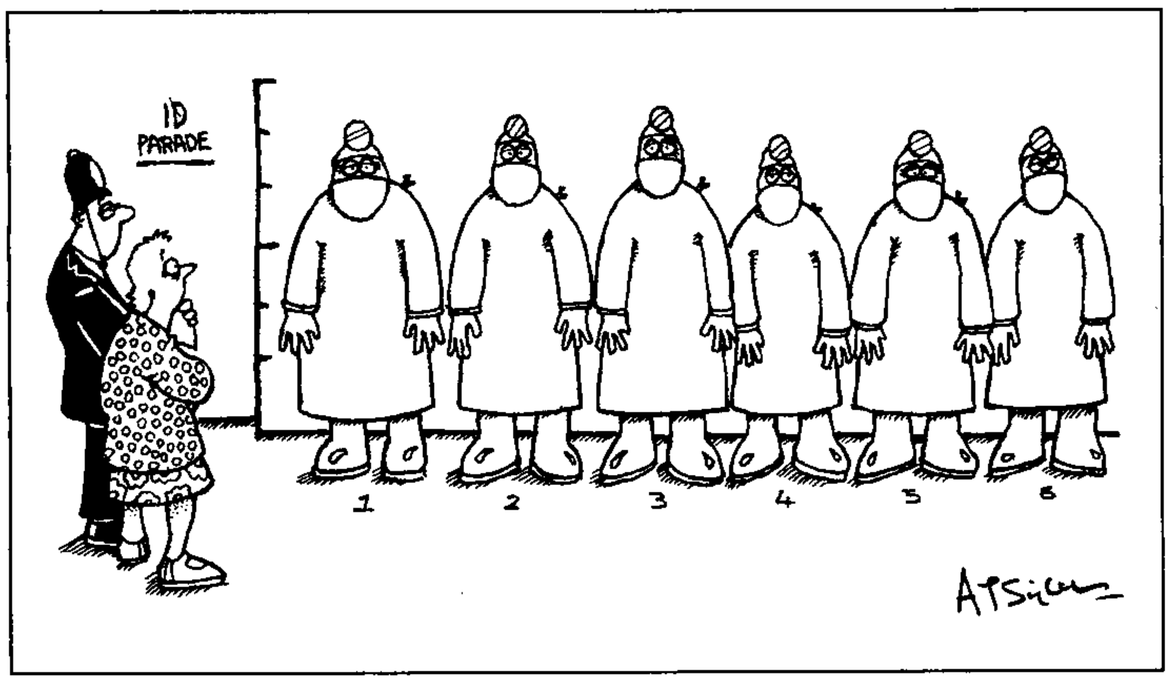
"I always said we could go to Europe and come out on top," said the mastermind of the England squad.

"And even though Brownsie and Cooksie played very badly, fortunately I was brilliant and scored the winning own goal."

Blairsie is 45.

ROY of the LOSERS

IT'S EURO 2000 AND ENGLAND ARE COMING HOME...
FACE IT LADS-WE WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH. WE'RE STILL BEHIND ON THE BASICS
EXCEPT ONE, BOSS-
-OUR BASIC SALARIES!
COOPER
COME ON YOU RED FERRARIS
THEY THINK THEY ARE ALL OVERPAID- THEY ARE NOW



POLLY FILLER AT WIMBLEDON

IT MAY be Wimbledon fortnight, but I can assure you that I'm not going to waste your time going on about Anna Kournikova! I'll leave that to my desperate male colleagues who, for some reason, insist on writing endless pieces about her long flaxen hair, tanned legs, and non-bouncing boobs in the new bra ad.

Come on, boys! You can do better than that. How about writing about the TENNIS instead of acting like drooling adolescents looking at an Athena poster? And haven't we had enough of all those witless puerile puns! Anna Cornikova! She's game for it! What a lovely doubles pair! Really! Needless to say, in the Filler household the pathetic Simon has switched over from Jeremy Clarkson's Extreme Bowls on Granada's Bloke Channel to BBC in the hope of seeing Ms K's knickers!

There's dribble all over the carpet – and it isn't from the toddler Charlie! (Talking of whom, many readers have asked whether I told him off last week for drawing on our neighbours' walls with a felt pen. No, of course not. I told off the nanny instead and then gave our neighbours a piece of my mind. If they are going to have newly painted walls in their house what do they expect? Charlie's only a child, for heaven's sake!)

BUT I digress. The important issue here is not Charlie (the scamp!), but the tennis, by which I *don't* mean some blonde bimbo flashing her wobbly bits for the testosterone-driven teenagers (average age 43, like Simon) who would normally be watching "Naked Chartered Surveyors" on Channel 5.

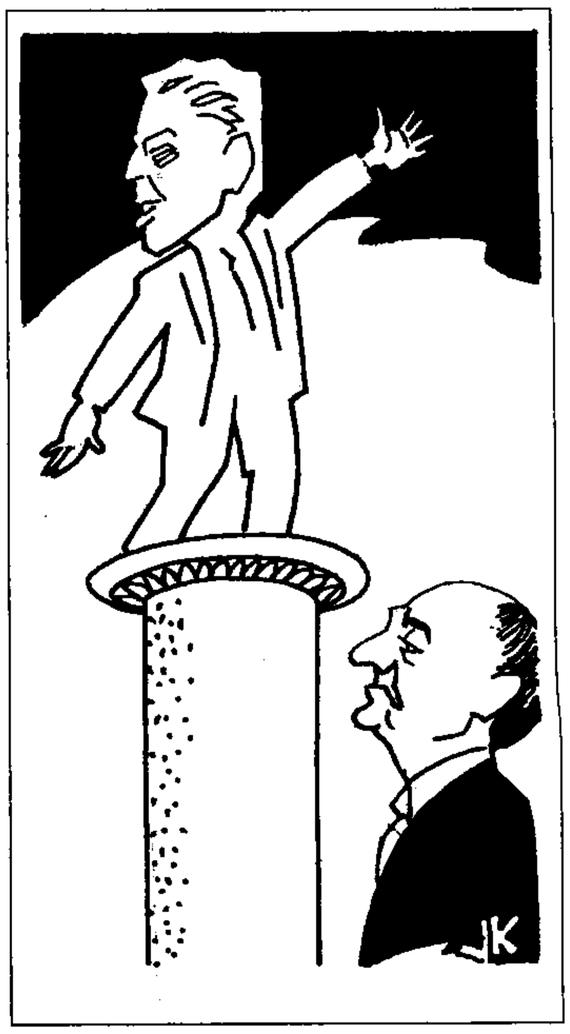
The rest of us genuine sports lovers can sit back and look forward to two weeks of supreme athleticism from the likes of Pete Sampras – now there *is* someone with a nice bum. Love all! New balls please, Pete! Is it hot in here or what?!?

© Polly Filler

Polly Filler's semi-autobiographical new novel *My Life With The Useless Simon And The Toddler Charlie* is available from the Sunday Times Book Service, price £1.99 per dozen.

RED KEN VETO ON STATUE

by Our Political Staff
Anne Glow-Saxon



KEN LIVINGSTONE, the Mayor of London, launched a scathing attack yesterday on plans to erect a statue in tribute to one of the greatest figures in British History – the venerable Blair.

"The idea of placing Blair on a pedestal," said Livingstone, "is absolutely unacceptable. Blair was an out-of-touch figure who ignored what was going on in England," he continued.

THE VENERABLE BAD

"Blair was responsible for a sanitised, airbrushed version of history which ignored all the real achievements of his predecessors."

The Mayor was particularly offended by the monkish Blair's ignoring of the legend of King Arthur Scargill and his Nights on the picket line, he continued.

ANGLO-SAXON CHRONIC

"Arthur defeated the evil witch Maggie La Thatch and created a perfect Camelot in which newts and lesbians could live happily together producing Sinn Fein theatre workshops.

"But the venerable Blair chooses only to remember his own pseudo-christian achievements and goes on and on about spreading the gospel of New Labour to the British Isles."

The Mayor would not be drawn on who exactly should occupy the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square, commenting only:

"I think the statue should clearly honour a popular, democratically-elected representative of the people of London who has a genuine interest in bringing down the government and *(continued Pagan 94)*

Who Should Be On That Plinth – You Decide

- ☐ Bart Simpson
- ☐ TV's Royle Family
- ☐ Graham Norton
- ☐ Ronald McDonald
- ☐ Lara Croft
- ☐ Aelfric *(Anglo Saxon Grammarian and Author of The Colloquy)*

Phone Now On The Bart Simpson Hotline 0878 523274

The Guardian Friday June 30 2000

Royal Poll Latest

THERE was shock today, as a new Royal Poll revealed that Royal Polls are not as popular as they once were.

Sixty-five percent of those surveyed said "leave me alone", up 12% on three years ago; whilst 21% said "haven't you got anything better to do than constantly ask us questions about the Royal family?"

Exclusive new poll: Should Camilla Be Queen? **2-7**

Exclusive new poll: Should William Be King? **8-14**

Exclusive new poll: Should Our Editor Be Sacked? **94**

HUSBAND

The Naked Witches

THE MEN WHO TRADE IN HUMAN MISERY

by Eye Investigative Team

HUGE FORTUNES are being made every day by the men behind the legal transportation of human cargo in Britain.

These Mr Bigs care nothing about the safety or comfort of their thousands of hapless victims, who will pay anything to get to London.

Some of these "passengers" are prepared to part with thousands of pounds just for the chance of getting to their office on time.

HORROR

The gangs who organise this traffic in human flesh give themselves terrifying names, such as First Great Western, Connex South East and Virgin.

Their "customers" who come from remote districts all over Britain are crammed into sealed, airless "compartments" where they are forced to stand for hours with nothing to sustain them but the occasional dried sandwich marked "BR Best Before 1947".

To reassure their families back home, the luckier ones are able to phone their loved ones and say pathetically "I'm on the train".

SHOCK

I spoke to a government official who said "We believe there are thousands of these wretched people coming in every day.

"I saw one train-load arriving at a siding in Waterloo. They must have been in there for seven hours at least, as a result of a signal failure outside Woking."

Tory MPs were last night calling for Government action to end *(cont'd. p. 94)*

THAT PETER JAY INTERVIEW IN FULL

A Private Eye digest service for readers too busy to read the 188 exclusive interviews in the Sunday supplements

Once he was hailed by Time magazine as the most promising... first-class brain... Winchester and Balliol... glittering prizes... Treasury high-flyer... prime minister's daughter... golden couple... ambassador to Washington at only 26... wife has legover with Watergate star... Jay has legover with nanny... love child... washed-up... TV-Am's Famous Five... Roland Rat... washed-up again... legover with some other people... Robert Maxwell's chief of staff... really washed-up this time... old friend Birt gives him job at BBC on £200,000 a year... never seen again.

Jay's monumental 94-part series *The Road To Nowhere, A History Of Trying To Make Money*, will be broadcast shortly on BBC Choice on alternate Tuesdays at 1.35 (subject to Indoor Bowls Championship from Leicester).

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

It's unfair, criticising us for not taking part in 'Encounters' at the National Gallery.
After all, the brief was for leading artists to rework old Masters.
Right.
I offered to do one of Damien's.
... who wanted to do one of mine, and I was going to rework one of yours, Sophie.
No-one can accuse us of not making an effort.

Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94 Service For The Gender Realignment Of An Incumbent

The Bishop: A warm welcome to you all on this sunny *(or it may be rainy)* day!

All: Good morning, Barry *(or it may be Jim, Kevin or Tom).*

Bishop: We are gathered here together to turn this man into this woman.

(Here the incumbent shall present himself for solemn realignment)

Bishop: Do you, John, agree to become Jane?

Incumbent: I do.

Bishop: And do you promise solemnly that you will remain faithfully as a woman as long as you both shall live?

Incumbent: We do, indeedy.

(There will then follow a reading from the Book of Genderless)

"Chapter One. And in the beginning God created male and female. Male and female created He them.

And the first man was called Adam. And the first woman was called Eve.

And Adam looked upon the woman and said 'I'd like to be you'.

And God saith unto them, 'There is no theological objection.'

So Adam became Eve and everyone lived happily ever after."

Here endeth the lesson.

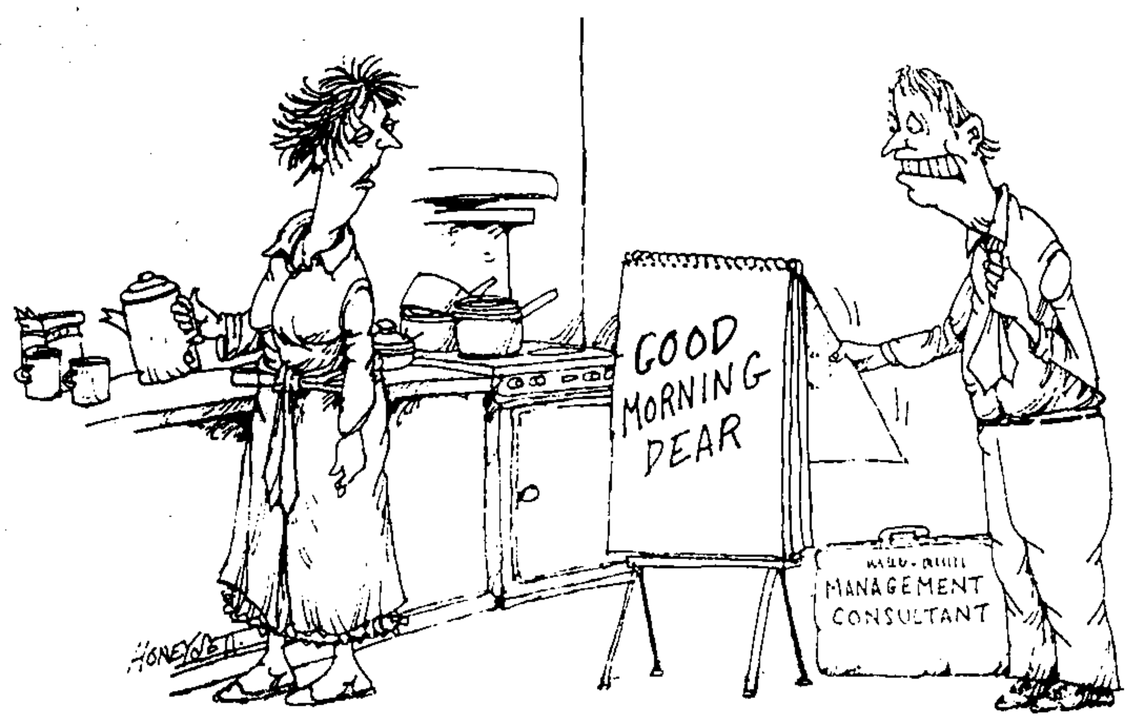
Bishop: We were now going to sing a hymn.

All: Ha, ha, ha. We know what cometh next!

Bishop: But it's become a "her" instead.

All: Nice one, Barry *(or it may by now be Jemima, Gladys, etc)*

Bishop: Number 94, She Who Would Valiant Be.



"Life is just one big presentation for you, isn't it?"

BBC TOTALLY HOPELESS SAYS BBC CHAIRMAN

by Our BBC Staff **Roland Ratings**

THE Chairman of the BBC, Sir Christopher Bland, today lashed out at himself.

In a scathing attack, he accused the BBC of producing nothing but mindless rubbish.

"Who's in charge?" he asked, at a specially convened press conference in his lavishly-appointed chairman's office on top of Broadcasting House.

"The whole thing is a shambles. Whoever's running it should be sacked."

When it was pointed out to Sir Christopher that the man responsible was none other than himself, he immediately agreed to stay on at a huge increase in salary.

Sir Pigling Bland is 78

LATE NEWS

BBC GOVERNORS PRAISE NEW PROGRAMME

IN THEIR annual report the BBC Governors did single out the recently broadcast "Complete Blackout" on BBC1 for high praise.

"It was so refreshing to see a programme that delivered exactly what it promised and didn't talk down to the viewers," said one clearly impressed Governor.

"If we can have more blank screens like this and less of everything else they make, then finally the Corporation could be back on track."

Responding to their comments, the BBC said they already had plans for a special "blackout theme night" on BBC2 and to release a compilation tape of the best moments of the black-out on a ninety minute compilation tape through BBC worldwide.

TV HIGHLIGHTS

AUNTIE'S SPORTING BLOOMERS (BBC1)

TERRY WOGAN introduces more side-splitting mistakes and howlers involving BBC sports coverage, including: losing the Premiership Football rights, the Test Cricket rights, the Rugby Union rights, the Formula One rights, and many, many more.

(Pictures courtesy of ITV and Sky Sports.)

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

Sophie's taken it badly, being excluded from the Turner nominations.
She's lying in a pool of vomit, empty bottles everywhere.
It's a brilliant installation–makes her rejection even harder to understand.
It was her turn to win, as well...

Letters to the Editor

Our National Shame

SIR – Along with all my fellow countrymen, I today felt deeply ashamed to be English, as I witnessed the disgraceful scenes of lawlessness perpetrated by a tiny minority of so-called football fans in Charleroi. Surely our nation has never sunk so low. And even the politicians must admit that something must be done.

R.L.J. COUCH-POTATO
(retd)
Becks

SIR – It is no good blaming the soccer yobs. We are all guilty in this country of institutional hooliganism. Each of us is a thug under the skin. And which of us can put his hand on his heart and say that, having had 20 pints of top-strength Belgian lager, he too would not have thrown the first chair?

REV. JEREMY
VOLETROUSER
Ince

SIR – The Belgian police are quite right. The only message these thugs understand is extreme violence. I therefore propose that the next time there is an international football championship, every known football supporter in Britain should be rounded up – preferably using CS gas, water cannon and armed baton charges – and then incarcerated for the duration of the tournament. Only by such draconian methods can this cancer in our midst finally be stamped out.

DAPHNE MILDEW
Barmby

SIR – The rise of soccer hooliganism can be dated exactly to the 1960s and the onset of the so-called permissive society. In my view the cynicism, disrespect and amorality of that degenerate epoch, associated with such TV shows as Sir David Frost's *That Was The Week* and Dame Joan Bakewell's *Late Night Line-Up*, were to sow a whirlwind from which the chickens are now coming home to reap.

R.F.P. KIPLING
St Cakes School, Keown

SIR – There can be no doubt as to who is to blame for the outrageous scenes in Brussels. Men. The male inability to control violent and aggressive urges has been responsible for everything bad that has ever happened in the history of the world. Don't just take away their passports. Take away their testicles – and then we will hear no more from them.

DAME GERMANY GREER
Shearer (Via Fe-mail)

SIR – The blame for the disgraceful scenes in Belgium must lie fairly and squarely with one man, William Hague, whose shameless attempts to whip up mass-hysteria against the euro has now resulted in the all too predictable genocide we have now witnessed on the continent.

JACK STRAW
Macmanaman

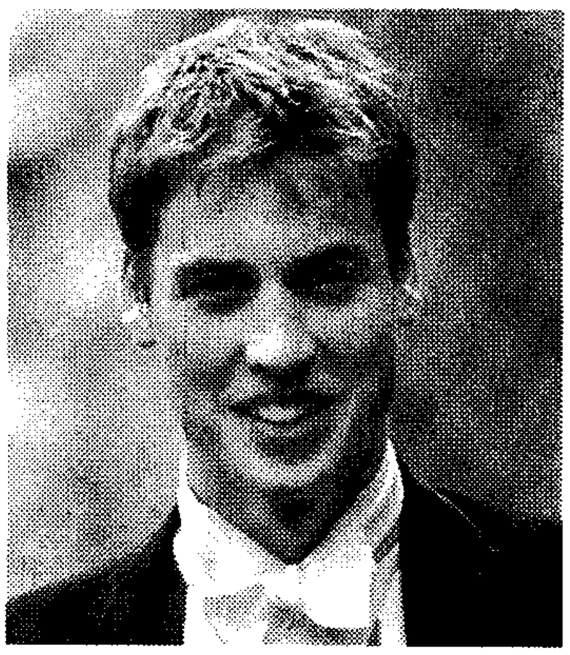
SIR – Come off it. What's new? We've been here before. All through history the English have been notorious for travelling to the continent to commit disgusting acts of hooliganism – Agincourt, Waterloo, D-Day – the list is endless, as I have shown already in my best-selling book *The University Challenge Book of English Soccer Hooliganism* (Snipcock and Tweed, £25.99).

J. PAXMAN
Southgate

SIR – It is scarcely surprising that we have witnessed the scenes we have in Brussels, when Englishmen are forced to live in a country which gives no outlet to their natural sense of patriotism. St George's Day was abolished by an EU directive. Trafalgar Square has been renamed Nelson Mandela Plaza. Morris dancing has been outlawed by politically correct loony left councils. All that is left for our young men is to demonstrate their pride in their country by smashing a few chairs over the heads of foreigners.

UKIP PATEL
Scholes

DIARY



HAPPY BIRTHDAY PRINCE WILLIAM

ANDREW NEIL: Dear William – Has it ever occurred to you to take that silver spoon out of your toffee-nosed mouth? Is the term "get a life" ever employed in the snootipants community in which you have chosen to mix? Or do the messages brought to you by your personal butler on a silver salver every morning only confine themselves to the fawning and the sycophantic? In a nutshell, isn't it high time you got yourself a real job rather than spending your days rubbing your body against nubile young aristocratic ladies, their pert nipples clearly visible beneath the very flimsiest of expensive dresses in their exclusive upper-class night-clubs?

Ever heard of these professions? A plumber. A construction worker. A coal-miner. A dentist. Real jobs. With real prospects.

But not for you. Oh, no. Not for Prince Got-it-all.

Because you won't be getting your fingers dirty, will you?

Please pardon me, Your Royal Highness, while I puke.

ANTHONY HOLDEN: My Dear Wills, You and I go back a long way. Throughout your life, I have been there at your shoulder, ready with good advice (eg, "'Tell Your Snooty Dad To Go Stuff It, Wills," Says Anthony Holden, The Man Who Knows What The Royals Really Think' Daily Express, June 4th 1998). Though I was not, strictly speaking, there at your conception, this is still a free country (despite your father's best efforts) and as the leading Royal expert, I certainly had a right to be.

Happy Birthday, Wills. You are much better-looking and a lot nicer than your father, and I know we can be really good friends. In fact, now that you are 18, I could legally adopt you as my son and heir and you need never see your horrid father again. I've got at least another 20-odd years of Royal articles in me – and with your "inside dirt" we could really go places. How about it, Wills?

LYNDA LEE-POTTER: Dear William – Your grandmother, the Queen, has recently put on at least 5 lbs – and no amount of pricey corsetry can convince me otherwise. Your great aunt Margaret often pigs out on potato crisps and pork pies. Your Uncle Andrew had better cut down on the lager and curries if he doesn't want his neck to grow even fatter. And your Aunty Fergie has suffered from tragic weight problems throughout her tawdry life.

Taking my magnifying glass to your 18th birthday snaps, I have just one thing to say.

Cut down on the chips, William, or there'll only be one woman in England still willing to wobble down the aisle with you.

And who wants to marry Vanessa Feltz?

CHARLOTTE RAVEN: Dear William – Boring, or what? Funny, isn't it, how people still get excited about the royals? Not me, though. As an anarcho-socio-communist with strong republican sympathies who's got all twelve CDs by The Cure, I'm above all that. Count me out, OK? As I've written time and time again, I'm not the slightest bit interested in you or the rest of your crappy clan.

Me, I've got more important things to think about than why you support Aston Villa (talk about crap teams!) or how you make a great paella (and what's that when it's at home, then?). And I couldn't give a crappy crap whether you prefer wearing your pink spotty waistcoat or your Union Jack waistcoat or your blue and brown waistcoat, though on balance I basically prefer the latter, it goes better with your eyes, which are for melting in.

So please, Wills, on this, your eighteenth birthday, stop expecting those of us who are fully paid-up republicans to want to keep writing about you and your so-called "lifestyle". *Bor-riiing!* And while we're on the subject, who wants to read all those interviews you gave? Going through them all for the umpteenth time, I note you say you "haven't really thought about" what it'd be like to be King. It doesn't take Sigmund Jung to tell us that this translates as "I couldn't give a bloody toss, basically".

Okay, but is this the right attitude for our future Monarch? Well, is it? Those of us who are sworn Republicans at least deserve a King we can be proud of.

So shape up, Wills – or else we'll basically stop writing about you at all.

LORD ST JOHN OF FAWSLEY: Dearest William – You and I know each other remarkably well. We are firm friends, never firmer, and long may that most delightful state of affairs continue. Widely regarded as our leading Constitutional Expert, I have long been a confidante of your dear great grandmama, soon to be 100 years young, bless! My wicked sense of humour is, I suspect, much to her gracious liking!

As our leading Social Historian, I would count it a most noble honour if you were to permit me to submit Your Royal Highness a few words of sound constitutional advice on bended knee.

First, you look *simply marvellous* in those gorgeous black and white houndstooth trousers. What a lucky hound, if I may say so, albeit impishly!

Second, I trust you have inherited your dear great grandmama's ability to get on with people from *all walks of life*, from the highest right down to the purely menial. I will never forget how she once went out of her way to address a lowly waiter. "Oh do get a move on!" she trilled – and something tells me that little man will remember that jewel of royal badinage for the rest of his born days!

NORMAN TEBBIT: Dear William – Did anyone else notice what very *unusual* clothes you were wearing in those birthday snaps?

White tie and tails on a hot summer's day?

Most peculiar.

Fancy waistcoats in colours like *mauve* and *pink*?

Come off it, sir. Every red-blooded Englishman knows one thing. *Mauve and pink are ladies' colours.*

And correct me if I'm wrong – but you're a **BLOKE**.

Next thing, you'll be wearing an Aids Awareness Ribbon.

Blimey.

And did I spy a somewhat *sallow complexion* creeping in?

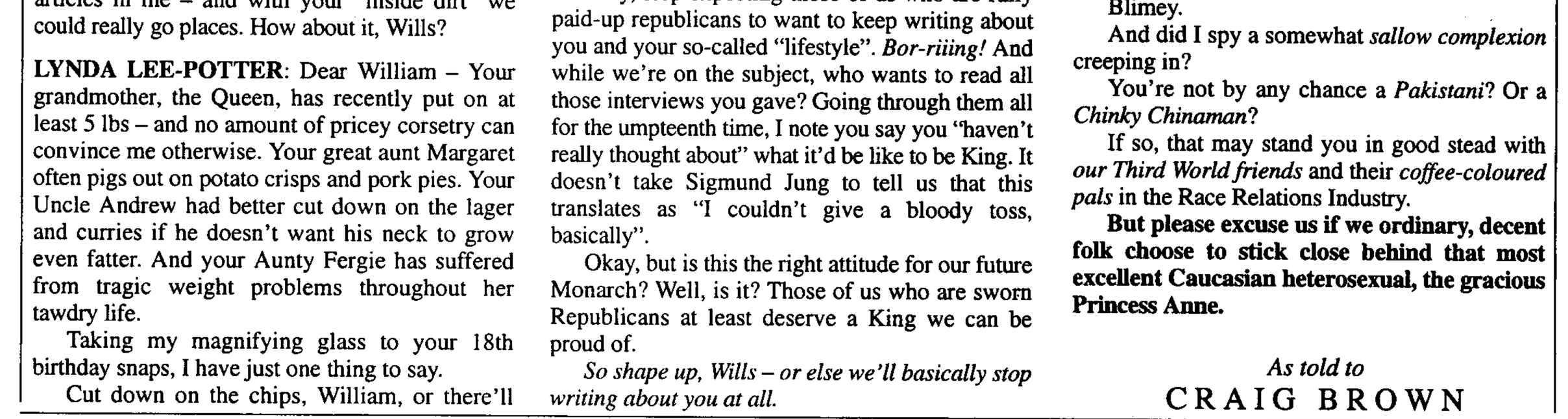
You're not by any chance a *Pakistani*? Or a *Chinky Chinaman*?

If so, that may stand you in good stead with *our Third World friends* and their *coffee-coloured pals* in the Race Relations Industry.

But please excuse us if we ordinary, decent folk choose to stick close behind that most excellent Caucasian heterosexual, the gracious Princess Anne.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN


I HAD A TRADITIONAL ENGLISH PUB BUILT IN MY L.A. MANSION WHEN I WAS A TAX EXILE...
IT'S GREAT FOR ENTERTAINING. VERY COSY...
IT'S CALLED THE COACH AND HORSES 'COS OF IT'S HORSEY THERE...
THERE'S A REAL INGLENOOK FIREPLACE, SOME BEAUTIFUL 17TH CENTURY HUNTING AND COACHING PRINTS..
AND LOTS OF LOVELY BRASSES.
ER, RESTING ACTRESSES, PLEASE, BARRY...
SOUNDS DELIGHTFUL.

Literary Review

Stalk is cheap

ALL of a sudden the atmosphere inside the average bookshop has grown distinctly horticultural. *The Tulip. Tulipmania. The Orchid Thief. Flora Domestica* (this one costs £30). *Tulip Fever* (just for a change). Want to write a bestseller? The herbaceous border is out there beckoning.

Literary taste — all right, best-seller taste — comes in waves. There's nothing much anyone can do about it, and the publisher's responsibility is simply to hold on to his hat and hope that by the time the surf's broken on the remainder bin beach he'll have unloaded three or four marketable imitations of whatever the current sensation happens to be.

There have been flower books before, of course. But that was back before this aspect of the gardening craze turned trendy; and one feels particularly sorry for Ms Christie Dickerson, whose mid-90s novel *The Lady Tree* predated all the guff about mad 17th century Dutchmen swapping their houses for tulip bulbs by about five years but sold zilch in comparison.

The Waterstone's equivalent of the Chelsea Flower Show is essentially a shrewdly targeted response to all those dinky little middlingly scholarly gift hardbacks pioneered by Dava Sobel's *Longitude* (Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief* even mentions this reference point on its jacket). As might be expected, the movement is highly self-perpetuating, with its own gurus and savants, most notably the *Independent*'s gardening correspondent Anna Pavord, author of *The Tulip* and encomiast of both Orlean's *The Orchid Thief* ("I was so engrossed on my flight, I never even noticed we had landed") and Deborah Moggach's *Tulip Fever* ("A story of love, deceit, changelings, and mistaken identity worthy of a Restoration dramatist").

But why *flowers* of all items? Well, the thing about flowers, particularly the gorgeous bits of exotica on display here, is that they're so wonderfully metaphorical. Look for one element in these delicious literary seedbeds, and what you'll find almost invariably turns out to be another. Most obviously, flowers are about sex. *The Tulip* is a "passionate" book. Susan Orlean, sweating her way through the Florida swamps, is on the trail of a ghost orchid with the ability to "seduce" its admirers. La Moggach, meanwhile, has cleverly managed to glue all the Dutch tulip mania stuff to the usual historical bonkfest about illicit loves and cheating hearts.

At the same time, in the nicest possible and genteelly reader-enticing way, flowers are about *obsession*. Orlean wants to know "what it feels like to care about something passionately" (that word again). Then there are Ottoman caliphs hot in pursuit of "The Vizier's Finger" and Edinburgh lawyers cheerfully bankrupting themselves for their hobby.

John Larouche, the Fakahatchee swamp denizen who gives Orlean's book its title, is clearly the wildest of wild-eyed dements ("You know, I'll see something, just *anything*, and I can't help but think to myself, Well, Jesus Christ, now that's interesting! Jesus, I'll bet you could find a *lot* of those"). But no, his enraptured biographer is happy to spend hours of her time speeding through the Florida backroads as he proses gamely on.

Sex. Hyperbole (according to Orlean, managing to clone a rare wild orchid would be the equivalent of "multiplying Siberian tigers or gemstones"). Quests (a ceaseless procession of Victorian explorers who fell over cliff-tops or got stuck up impenetrable rivers in search of the frond of their dreams). What remains, when the dust has settled, is a classic exercise in modern publishing — taking something about which there is hardly anything to say and garlanding it with the usual dollops of "passion" and Sunday supplement-style history.

As for the flowers themselves, blithely reinvented in this file of elegant volumes, somehow they stop being flowers and become, well, a blank sheet of paper on which you can write anything you fancy. Metaphor has its drawbacks, you see, the chief one here being that the subject under discussion is nothing *but* metaphor.

Meanwhile it's tempting to wonder what the next wave breaking over the beach will consist of? The future may lie in Victorian insectivora or the history of lacemaking, but for the moment, in the world of the genteel literary crowd-pleaser, the petal is king.

Books & Bookmen

■ SO, Waterstone's is remaining part of HMV Media, at least for now. Despite Alan "Weasel" Giles' "confidence in the long-term prospects of UK bookselling... and in particular our confidence on (sic) the future of Waterstone's", HMV has elected to keep the company simply because none of the "entirely unsolicited" bids for the chain came close to the £300m reserve price.

EMI still wants to offload its stake, preferably through a stock market flotation, but advisers have indicated that the company will never float with the declining books business on board. The only one who would be likely to pay the full whack is old Dan Dare — Tim Waterstone. One problem with this is that the Weasel refuses to countenance Dan's overtures. The other is that the City won't lend him £300m to buy a company stricken by the generally bad state of the book market, suicidally low morale and the imposition of an alien culture by md David "Mekon" Kneale.

The Mekon's decision last week to sack Robert "Dream" Topping, the high-profile old school manager of Waterstone's Manchester Deansgate branch, after 13 years in the job, has provoked an understandable outcry. The Manchester literati are believed to be up in arms, and even many of those who found Topping's many eccentricities enervating are bemoaning the loss of a great bookseller. The official reason for the action is his refusal to follow head office procedure — something which was encouraged by the old devolved regime, but discouraged in the brave new Mekonised world.

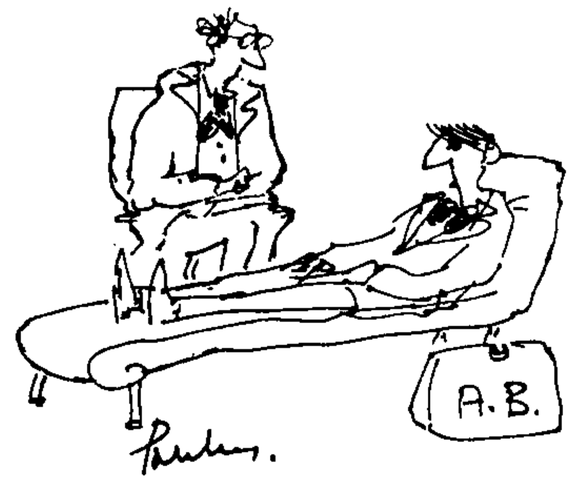
Head office refused to let him replace his recently-departed assistant manager, as a result of the recruitment freeze (see *Eyes* passim), a move which placed him under great stress. An uncharacteristic run of bad luck on stock gave Kneale the excuse he wanted, and Dream Topping was given the push.

■ **THREE years after he was lured back to Transworld from HarperCollins to establish the Anchor imprint, John Saddler is back on the market again, his division having been axed due to mounting losses.**

It may be instructive to remember the trade advertisement campaign with which the list was launched. As well as featuring a picture of a scantily-clad woman seemingly tattooed with the Anchor colophon, the ad bore the sadly unprophetic slogan: "Here to Stay".

■ CAROLINE Coon has won her two-year libel fight against Random House and Jonathon Green (see *Eyes passim*).

The publisher ditched its defence at the eleventh hour, admitting that the allegations made about Coon in Green's *All Dressed Up* had been completely without foundation. Why did Green and the publisher not take this path earlier and save themselves a lot of bother and the £73,000 paid to Coon in damages and costs?



"Life is seldom that black and white, Mr Beardsley"

In the introduction to the paperback, Green notes that his book was "the victim of a pair of libel suits", the settlement of which required the deletion of "a small and important anecdote". Green goes on to bemoan "sixties survivors" like Coon for "clinging forever to their once relevant past", seemingly forgetting that in writing the book, he was doing just that himself.

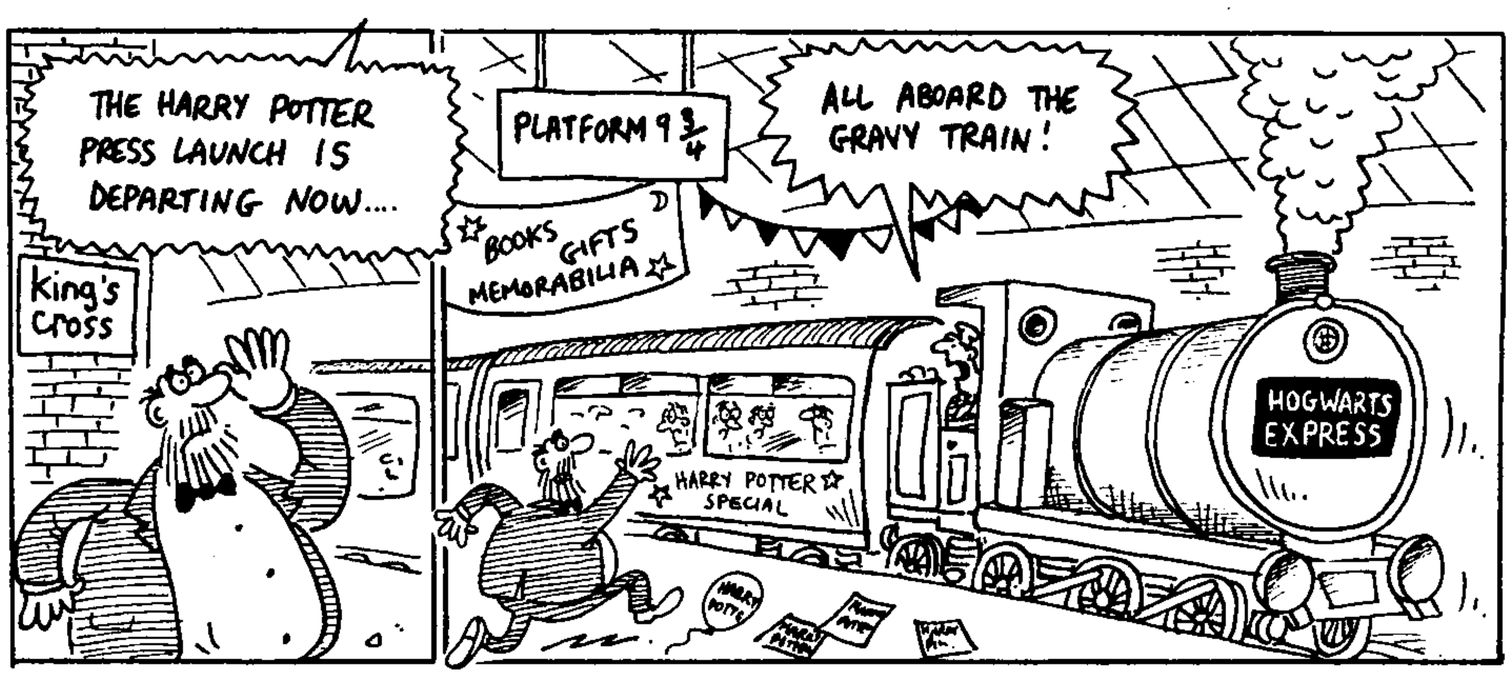
Long involved with fundraising for the Roundhouse arts centre in Chalk Farm, Coon was invited by letter to a gala at the venue by *Time Out* founder and ex-Mr Janet Street-Porter Tony Elliott. The following week, however, Elliott phoned Coon to "disinvite" her. The reason? He had realised he had also invited Green and Dame Gail Rebuk from Random House — both of whom are more likely to be of use to him these days than a humble artist. Charming, eh?

■ ONLINE reviewers award just two stars out of a possible five to Amy Jenkins's first novel *Honeymoon* on the internet bookseller, amazon.com.

Only one reader actually praises the book, quoting *Cosmopolitan* magazine: "If you liked *This Life*... you'll love *Honeymoon* — an addictively funny read."

The independent-minded romantic fiction connoisseur whose judgement differs so greatly from the other readers quoted gives her email address as karen.geary @hodder.co.uk. Surely no relation of Amy Jenkins's publicity agent at Hodder, er, one Karen Geary?

'Bookworm'



IN THE BACK

WYRES CROSSED

LIKE pretty well everyone else in the area, David Lock was rather surprised when he was elected in May 1997 as Labour MP for the normally rather Conservative area of Wyre Forest, Worcestershire.

Almost at once, Mr Lock took up an issue that dominated politics in his area: the threatened closure of the popular local hospital at Kidderminster in the heart of his constituency.

On 28 October 1997 when he was just getting used to his new job, Lock circulated a letter to supporters, as follows: "As I am sure you have seen in the local press, there is a serious threat to the acute services at Kidderminster General Hospital. The threat comes from plans being developed by Worcestershire Health Authority."

The proposals, he went on, would lead to the downgrading of the accident and emergency department at the hospital and the removal of all in-patient surgery and medicine – reducing the general hospital to a cottage hospital.

A "local campaign", the MP revealed, had been formed to "counter this threat". Its chairman was Dr Richard Taylor, a former consultant at the hospital. The vice-chairmen were a prominent local businessman and the MP himself. Mr Lock went on to ask supporters to protest to the health authority and to send in contributions to "preserve health services in Kidderminster".

Just before Christmas 1997, only seven months after he first went to parliament, Mr Lock was appointed parliamentary private secretary to the lord chancellor. The promotion did not stop Mr Lock campaigning for the Kidderminster hospital, though close observers noticed that his zeal over the issue appeared to have abated.

In July last year Mr Lock took another giant stride up the ministerial ladder when he was appointed parliamentary under secretary to the lord chancellor. Now he was part of the "payroll vote" and was obviously expected to support government policies. The closure of the Kidderminster hospital was inextricably bound up with brave new plans for a PFI (private finance initiative) hospital to replace the crumbling royal infirmary at Worcester.

Mr Lock's previous view of the matter underwent a sea change. His opposition to the effective closure of Kidderminster hospital was replaced by support for the effective closure of Kidderminster hospital and for the new PFI proposals at Worcester. Mr Lock resigned as vice chair of the protest group in Kidderminster, and circulated his constituents with a rather long document justifying his new stance on the matter.

In a recent letter to constituents Lock claims he has been "working continuously to improve the plans and maximise services at Kidderminster". The decisions about the hospital, he says, "are made by the health authority and the government, not by me as Member of Parliament" (and, he forgot to add, member of the government). He claims that his "work over three years" has resulted in improvements in the original plan. What was going to be a 35-bed hospital (well, 82, actually,) will now be "up to" a 120-bed hospital (well, 95, actually).

David Lock: The MP who turned

This new approach was not greeted with deafening applause in Wyre Forest. From the moment in March 1999 that the government's support for the new PFI plans for Worcester was announced by the then health secretary Frank Dobson, who cut the first sod for the new hospital, a new organisation – "Health Concern" – was formed by supporters of Kidderminster hospital. In the few weeks before the local elections last year, Health Concern managed to nominate several council candidates whose only policy was to campaign for the hospital. The result was astonishing. In Wyre Forest, seven of these candidates were elected. In the two districts of Shropshire affected, four other Health Concern candidates were elected. In this year, eight new Health Concern candidates were elected.

The position on Wyre Forest council is now as follows. There are 19 Health Concern councillors – by far the largest party – 11 Labour, five Tory, four Lib Dems and three old-fashioned Liberals whose slogan in the election was "Save Our Hospital". The alliance campaigning to save Kidderminster hospital now commands a majority.

Mr Lock refuses to buckle under this electoral rebuff. On 25 May researchers at University College London issued a press release about an independent report to be published on 5 June. It showed how the accumulated deficits in the NHS in Worcestershire coupled with the unexpectedly huge bill for the new PFI hospital "have forced the health authorities to cut hospital services across the county". Among the list of horrifying facts revealed in the report were:

- The catchment population of the new PFI hospital will rise from 280,000 to 380,000 residents.
- Acute admissions from the increased catchment area are projected to fall between 21 and 37 percent from 1998.

"It is not clear where the displaced caseload from Kidderminster hospital will go after acute beds close. The likely consequence of these service cuts is that those who can afford to go private will go private while those who can't will go without."

Professor Allyson Pollock, head of the school of public policy at University College London, travelled to Kidderminster on 25 May to address a packed and enthusiastic press conference about her unit's findings. Mr Lock responded not to her but to the chairman of University College council, Lord Young of Graffham.

In a long three-page letter, Lock complained to Young that the press conference was given before the report came out, that there are "several factual inaccuracies in it" and that the local health authority executives have been "scathing in their condemnation of this so-called research". The letter ended by questioning "whether Professor Pollock is justified in using public money to pursue her research in this manner."

The MP's letter was passed to Professor Pollock by the university provost Chris Llewellyn Smith. She replied on 14 June. She was not impressed with Lock's complaint that she had held a press conference in advance of the report – which was common practice. She noticed that not a single factual inaccuracy had been identified. All her figures had come from the relevant health authorities. The precise figure for the capital cost of the new PFI hospital, which had been challenged by the local health authority, had appeared in a press release issued by, er, the secretary of state for health. As for the reference to her use of public money, Prof Pollock wondered mildly whether this was not "an implicit threat to academic freedom".

Live Wyres: Hospital campaigners

The professor's published report repeats the appalling facts that vital hospital services are being cut without any adequate replacement care; that the provision of beds and jobs in the health service will fall to quite intolerable depths; and that the health authority deficits have taken on a higher priority than patient care. Not one of these general findings, nor for that matter a single specific one, has been refuted by the local health authority or the junior minister at the lord chancellor's department.

A COMPLETE COKE-UP

MISCARRIAGES of justice do not always damage defendants. The Operation Stealer cases, in which the convictions of Brian Doran and Kenneth Tougher were quashed, freed two men who were, on the factual evidence submitted over two long trials, indubitably engaged in dealing in enormous quantities of cocaine.

Their convictions and 25-year prison sentences were quashed for "abuse of process". New trials were ordered, but the new trials were themselves ruled out of order last year by Mr Justice Turner – again for abuse of process.

So shocked were those in authority that the attorney-general commissioned an inquiry under His Honour Gerald Butler QC, who has often sat in judgment in drugs cases. Butler's report acquits anyone in authority of corruption or deliberate deceit, but reveals that the abuse of process in the trials resulted in the main from a level of incompetence which defies belief on the part of the lawyers acting for the prosecuting authority, HM Customs & Excise.

On one occasion a customs officer was allowed to blurt out the name of well-known drug dealer who, she alleged, had met the defendants. She was able to blurt this out even though she had not named the dealer in her original statement. The other main abuse of process arose when the defendants discovered that telephones and hotel rooms they had used had been bugged without the permission of the hotel owners. Though this seems (indeed is) a trivial technicality when such huge amounts of drugs are involved, the vital legal importance of securing the hotels' permission was well-known to the lawyers involved, and the abject failure of customs to get that permission is almost incredible.

This is not the first time solicitors for HM customs have come under intense scrutiny at an inquiry. The roasting of top customs solicitors at the Scott arms-to-Iraq inquiry in May 1994 still sears the memory of anyone present. Sir Richard Scott, and now Judge Butler, criticise the solicitors again and again for not appreciating their legal responsibilities and even, in a crucial instance in the Stealer cases, not turning up in court.

Approached by the *Eye*, customs revealed that there has been no disciplinary hearing or proceedings against anyone in its solicitors' office. Mr David Pickup, who was not in charge of the Stealer cases but is mentioned several times in the report, remains in charge.

Mr Pickup's reign at Customs since he took charge after the Scott debacle has not been exemplary. Last year his department lost a big discrimination case at Croydon, in which a blind employee, Farook Shah, was refused a promotion for which he was extremely well qualified. This disaster, too, appears to have made no difference to the regime of Mr Pickup.

As for the barristers, Michael Brompton, a junior counsel, is criticised by Butler for falling "below the standard of competence he ought to have shown". A customs spokesman explains rather lamely that "he was just hired in for the job – we have no control over him". The plain fact remains that when prosecuting people for hideous drugs crimes, customs lawyers will find themselves ranged against the most distinguished and relentless barristers in the business – barristers who will be more than alert to spot technical loopholes in the prosecutors' case.

In such circumstances rather higher prosecuting standards may be necessary. Indeed, another judicial inquiry over the next few months will decide whether or not the power to prosecute should be removed from customs altogether.

RAMBO-RAIDERS

WHY would those heading the prison service order an unprecedented raid on a "model" jail – praised by politicians, reformers and inspectors – and remove two of the country's most successful governors?

Could it be because Blantyre House, the resettlement prison for serious offenders nearing the end of their sentence, was regarded by senior managers as far too liberal in Jack Straw's "jail 'em or tag 'em" Britain? And was it in any way connected to the fact that the Kent jail was again to be cited as a penal centre of excellence by the soon-to-be-axed home office bogeyman, Sir David "Rambo" Ramsbotham, prisons inspector?

Last May dozens of riot squad officers and prison officers from other jails descended on Blantyre House. They went through the prison, smashing doors to the hospital wing and chapel searching for contraband and illicit materials. Under a cloud of suspicion, governor Eoin McLellan-Murray and his deputy David Newport were relieved of their duties and shipped off to work at other jails.

The raid astonished everyone who wasn't party to it, because Blantyre House has an amazing record. Its reconviction rate for offenders after two years of freedom is just 8 percent, compared to a national average of more than 50 percent. In the last five years there has been no assault at the jail. At less than 1 percent, it returns the lowest positive drug testing results in the country. Many of its 120 inmates leave the jail daily or nightly to go to work, for training or to participate in community projects. Last year only twice did prisoners fail to return on time.

It had been praised by the home affairs select committee, and Martin Narey, head of the prison service (who authorised the raid), had, earlier this year, also commended it. In the meantime, however, a team of area managers were gathering "intelligence" that the jail was a hot-bed of criminal activity.

Known officially as the Chaucer group, but known among the inmates as the Stasi, they are said to have long been unhappy about the regime at Blantyre.

In May the group persuaded Mr Narey to swoop. It was duly reported in the tabloids and to the Commons that the raid had netted cannabis, pornography, mobile phones, cameras, credit cards, escape equipment – and evidence of "largescale cash transactions", which all sounded very suspicious.

Standing his ground: Sir David 'Rambo' Ramsbotham

Er... except that the documents detailing cash transactions were court documents for an inmate's appeal – he had been convicted of money laundering. The escape equipment was one inmate's work tools – they were returned to him the next day. Some of the inmates' employers paid their salaries into bank accounts – hence the bank and credit cards. Some mobile phones are authorised for those at work. The cameras belonged the jail's camera club. The amount of cannabis recovered was tiny. No jail full of men does not have some pornography circulating – and Blantyre had only seven items. Oh – and the drug tests carried out on all inmates within 48 hours of the raid all came back with negative results, apart from two that were spoiled.

The prison service admits, nearly two months later, that no charge has been brought against anyone. A spokesman maintained that internal and criminal investigations were still under way, although Kent police say they are not involved in any criminal investigation. The spokesman agreed that many of the items confiscated in the raid had been authorised and had now been returned to inmates, but "under very different conditions". He denied the raid had been completely over the top and maintained that it was required to maintain public confidence in Blantyre.

Simon Hughes, the Lib Dem home affairs spokesman, alerted by the probation officers' union will this week ask a series of questions – including the nature of the intelligence, the grounds for removing the governor and whether the widely-circulating allegation that there were those who deliberately set out to "undermine" Blantyre has been investigated.

Meanwhile the prison has had a repairs bill of around £5,000; staff and prisoner morale has been shaken; and Mr McLellan-Murray has declined to take up the job of number two at a neighbouring prison. He is now on special leave until after the internal investigation and is said to be considering legal action against the service over his treatment. His deputy with nearly 30 years' service is off sick.

Meanwhile Rambo's latest report on Blantyre, which went to home secretary Jack Straw in March, has still not been published while "the prison service seeks to correct some factual errors". Some of those are believed to be passages that highlight tension between the progressive jail governors and the area managers, but Rambo is said to be standing his ground.

PS: The home office now sees Rambo as an even bigger thorn than his predecessor Judge Stephen Tumim. Straw has already decided the best way of silencing his criticism of some of our worst penal dustbins is to axe his job, merging the post next year with that of the probation inspectorate. Sir David apparently learnt of his demise from a leak to a newspaper reporter on the day he was due to hear the news officially from the home office.

His prison reports are no longer available to all interested parties and have to be recovered from the internet and, in what is seen as a further undermining within his department, inspectorate staff have been approached to join home office committees without reference to Rambo himself.

Symonds says... or not

TOM KING, (right) chairman of the Commons intelligence and security committee, was as smooth as ever when he introduced his committee's report into the revelations of the so-called Mitrokhin Archive about alleged British spying for the Russian KGB.

Unusually he even attacked MI5 and the security services for not taking stronger action against Melita Norwood, the 87-year-old Stalinist granny from south-east London who was passing information to the Russians. But Mr King and his committee were much less forthright on the subject of another KGB spy, former Scotland Yard detective John Symonds.

Though Symonds was named in the same archive as Granny Norwood, the King committee explains that he was not sent for trial or even interviewed by MI5 because he had "already been granted immunity from prosecution".

Well, yes, so he had. In 1984 Symonds made a 263-page statement to Hertfordshire police and then offered to tell his whole story "to the proper authorities" while still under immunity. MI5 and MI6 chiefs were informed of this by Herts police, but never bothered to speak to Symonds. The government's response to the security and intelligence committee's questions about Symonds stated that "MI5 had the benefit of the earlier views of the director of public prosecutions and the police that he could not be taken seriously".

Why? The answer had nothing to do with Symonds's entirely accurate and extensive information about the KGB, for whom he had worked under cover all over the world for eight years. The reason was simply that Symonds insisted on telling anyone who would listen the real truth about corruption at Scotland Yard.

In 1969, when still a detective sergeant, Symonds was caught up in a police corruption scandal in which he was named by the *Times*. The Scotland Yard officers who headed the police investigation into his case were Chief Supt Bill Moody and Commander Wally Virgo. Symonds now says that he was paid £2,000 by the officers to go into permanent exile. If he returned he was threatened with a Masonic execution. He fled into the arms of the KGB.

In 1977 Moody and Virgo were convicted of accepting vast bribes from Soho pornographers and jailed for 12 years apiece. The crackdown on corrupt Yard officers ended that year, but Symonds knew there were scores of other officers on the take. He named many of them in his 1984 statement to Herts police. Some of the names were those of senior officers who told MI5 that Symonds could not be taken seriously.

In its conclusions, the security and intelligence committee says that MI5 or MI6 "could have interviewed Mr Symonds at least for the intelligence and historical record". Yes, but what about the committee itself? It could have interviewed Symonds in the impressive surroundings of a libel-free and secure House of Commons committee. In September last year, Mr Symonds wrote to the committee offering his services:

"I am ready to testify about my activities on behalf of the KGB between 1972 and my return to England in 1980; to all my subsequent repeated but spurned efforts to fully disclose these activities to the British security services; and to everything which I disclosed in the sworn statements which I gave under immunity to the Hertfordshire Constabulary in 1984 and 1985."

Tom King himself acknowledged the letter but the committee did not take up Mr Symonds's offer. When Martin Short, the journalist and co-author of the famous 1977 exposé, *The Fall of Scotland Yard*, whose book on Symonds is doing the rounds of the publishers, offered to accompany Symonds at the committee hearings, his offer was spurned as well. Attacking MI5 for not pursuing a 87-year-old granny is one thing. Taking evidence from a man who knows an awful lot about corruption at Scotland Yard, and is not afraid to spill the beans, is another matter.

AUDIT-ACIOUS!

BRAND Finance plc has carried out another survey on the split between the fees taken by the big five accountancy firms for audits and for their other work.

The survey shows that more and more money is pouring into the burgeoning coffers of the Big Five from non-audit work – and proportionately less and less for audit work.

The figures suggest, says Brand, that auditors are serving two gods: management and investors. A typical pattern is that the accountancy firm "wins" the contract to do the audit for a big company and then, once its feet are inside the door, piles up contracts for much more lucrative non-audit work. (The net effect of this drift [see last *Eye*] is that the accountancy firm does more and more audits cheaply so it ingratiates itself with its clients and makes huge profits on other non-audit accountancy work.)

Leading (or trailing) the field in this business are PricewaterhouseCoopers who got 28 percent of their total fees for work on audits, and collected 72 percent for other work. Second in the list of shame was Ernst & Young (60 percent of fees on non-audit work). Third, KPMG (65 percent). Fourth Arthur Andersen (61). Fifth Deloitte & Touche (58). All other auditors could only just manage 51 percent of their fees on non-audit work. The bigger the firm, the more widespread the scam.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

NINE months ago former *Sunday Telegraph* deputy City editor Patrick Weever lost an industrial tribunal case against constructive dismissal. During the hearing Weever loudly blew the whistle on the notorious "Friday night drop" – the time-honoured abuse whereby Sunday business sections are hand-fed shared exclusive stories Downing Street-style by financial PRs.

Weever's revelations came as no surprise to *Eye* readers as this manipulation of the needy by the greedy has been chronicled here on many occasions – most recently in June 1998 which detailed the Sunday business scoops of the previous 12 months.

Depressingly nothing has changed in the subsequent two years. But why should it? The "drop" is a system of mutual benefit. It saves lazy or overworked journalists. It wins PR men friends and influences clients. It saves rival city editors from the embarrassment of being beaten up by a rival or allows them to catch up.

Everybody gains. Everybody except the reader, that is, who is sold press releases as stories or may not read the real story so as not to bite the PR hand that feeds. And stock market regulators who read announcements in the Sundays when they are supposed to be the first to know.

The excuse is that there can be no risk of insider-dealing because the stock market is closed on the weekend. But that ignores the fact that because most Sunday business sections are finished on Friday night the "drop" has to take place ever earlier, making the communication of price-sensitive information when markets are open more and more common.

The pattern of the "drop" remains the same despite adverse publicity, the Weever hearing and supposed pressure from the Stock Exchange. The main grateful recipients are the two most influential Sunday business sections – the *Telegraph* and the *Times*. Lesser lights – such as *Sunday Business*, the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Observer* and the *Sunday Express* – sometimes share but mostly are given crumbs.

Consider what has been "dropped" since we last reviewed the system.

2 August 1998: Both the *Times* and *Telegraph* "reveal" that American buyout experts Kohlberg Kravis Roberts are to buy the paint interests of German combine Hoechst "for more than £1 billion". Authors: Kirstie Hamilton and Richard Rivlin.

6 September: The Sunday twins score again. This time with the news that the LIFF market is seeking to merge with the London Clearing House. Authors: Hamilton again (plus Dominic Rushe) and *Telegraph* city editor Neil Bennett, who was deeply wounded by Weever's suggestion that he was a "supine letterbox" for embargoed press releases.

13 September: Hamilton and Bennett are once again two journalists with but a single story. "Pilkington set to beef up board", declares Bennett. "Reinforcements for Pilkington", announces Hamilton. Both have the names of the three new non-executive directors. Pilkington is a client of PR firm Finsbury.

11 October: A bumper Sunday. Not one but *three* identical stories in the PR men's favourites. Singapore Power to possibly bid for London Electricity is disclosed by Andrew Lorenz in the *Times* and Weever's successor Mary Fagan in the *Telegraph*. The same inquisitive duo also unearth that Centrica is favourite to buy the oil and gas interests of Powergen. The latter is a client of leading financial spinmeister Brunswick. Centrica is represented by Finsbury. Finally, supposed rival business editors John Jay of the *Times* and the saintly Bennett chip in with another "scoop" – that corporate financier John Nelson is quitting Lazards for Credit Suisse First Boston.

8 November: Another busy day for the "drop" merchants. Jay and Rivlin share the news that management buyout specialists Candover are backing former Rank director John Garrett to bid for Rank Leisure. Doug Morrison in the *Telegraph* and John Waples in the *Times* share that Hammerson is selling its Canadian property portfolio to an Ontario pension fund. Hammerson is a Brunswick client.

22 November: "GRE goes up for sale in £3bn auction", announces *Times* city editor Hamilton. "Battle to takeover £3.1bn GRE", echoes Neil Bennett and Grant Ringshaw in the *Telegraph*. Insurers Guardian Royal Exchange are a client of Citigate Dewe Rogerson and Finsbury.

6 December: Another bumper result for the PR men. Not just the usual recipients but also the *Mail on Sunday* disclose that Scottish Power is to merge with Pacific Corp. Another "scoop" Bennett shared with David Parsley (*Times*) and Ian King/Oliver Morgan (*MoS*). Scottish Power is a Brunswick client.

17 January 1999: New year but the same old game. Both the *Times* (Hamilton) and *Telegraph* (Bennett) herald the successful bid by Vodafone for Air-Touch and (Lorenz/Fagan) the likely British Aerospace bid for Marconi. Vodafone is a Tavistock Communications clients. Cardew acts for BAe.

31 January: Rivlin in the *Telegraph* and Waples in the *Times* simultaneously disclose a deal between pub chains Regent Inns (Finsbury) and SFI Group (College Hill).

14 February: This time the *Telegraph* (Fagan) shares with the *Observer* (Heather Connon) that National Power (Smithfield Financial) may sell off its overseas interests.

7 March: Both the *Telegraph* (Bennett) and the *Times* (Waples and Rushe) discover that Paul Reichmann is to gamble on Canary Wharf's success by swapping his salary for a giant warrants/options package.

21 March: Brunswick client Railtrack's plan to spend an extra £27bn is exclusively revealed to the *Times* (Parsley) and *Telegraph* (Morrison).

25 April: The *Observer* (business editor Emily Bell) and the *Telegraph* (Bennett) disclose that Littlewoods is demerging its pools division.

4 July: John Jay finds that his story about online auctioneers QXL being floated for £750m also makes the *Telegraph* thanks to Lauren Mills. QXL is a client of Financial Dynamics with whom Jay has enjoyed a close relationship.

11 July: Conglomerate Tomkins, always one to get its story in the Sundays first, reveals via the *Times*, *Mail on Sunday* and *Observer* that it is to demerge its Ranks Hovis McDougall division. However, Tomkins' PR Hudson Sandler is calling in past favours as the knives are currently out for chairman Greg Hutchins. A year on (18 June) a schizophrenic *Sunday Times* boosts both sides.

15 August: The "drop" is ever present. The *Times* and *Telegraph* share three stories. Goldman Sachs hiring former Barclays boss Martin Taylor. Adman Martin Sorrell's bumper bonus package at WPP. Candover likely to buy the engineering division of

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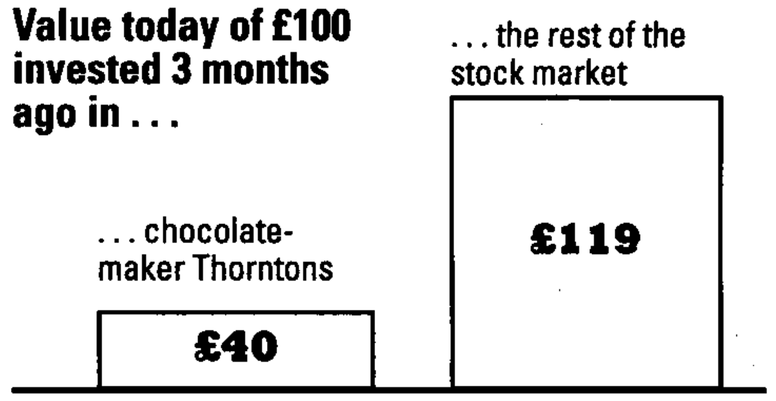

Charter. The *Telegraph* and the *Sunday Express* record the role of cricketer Ian Botham in betting tipsheet *Sports Adviser*.

12 September: The Energis (Citigate) bid for Racal Telecom (Brunswick) finds its way into the *Telegraph* (Bennett) and *Times* (Lorenz).

10 October: Post Weever the beat goes on. The *Telegraph* and *Times* share the news that Blue Circle Industries (Brunswick) is to sell its heating side to Baxi Partnership.

17 October: The shared story this week is a bid by UK Active Value Fund for travel group Hogg Robinson.

31 October: This time it is that Anglo American is to bid for Tarmac.

7 November: Now it is the RMC bid for cement rivals Rugby Group. John Waples has coincidentally contributed to all four *Times* stories.

30 January 2000: The new millennium sees no change in the drop. The *Times* and the *Telegraph* expect Lafarge to bid for Blue Circle Industries.

27 February: The *Observer*, *Sunday Express* and *Independent on Sunday* forecast that Camelot will slash its profit share by half in order to keep the national lottery contract. Over at the *Times* (Hamilton) and the *Telegraph* (Bennett) the shared news is that the Prudential is considering a bid for annuity weakened Equitable Life.

9 April: The *Telegraph* and *Observer* forecast C&N Touristic will raise its bid for Thomson Travel.

30 April: An American rival bid for Hyder is forecast by the *Times* and *Observer*.

14 May: Associated British Ports is to sell assets worth £650m say the *Times* and *Telegraph* confidently.

21 May: The *Telegraph*, *Times* and *MoS* agree: Marks & Spencer will slash its dividend.

28 May: The shared big story for the *Times* (Lorenz) and *Telegraph* (Fagan) is that T-Online is favourite to buy Freeserve (Citigate). The sale of Covent Garden Piazza is forecast by the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Observer*. The *Mail* and the *Telegraph* also find out that property dealer Nick Leslau is planning to take Prestbury private.

11 June: The proposed float for radio production company UBC Media makes the *Times* and *Telegraph*.

18 June: Back to where we began. Neil Bennett and John Jay slugging it out with *Sunday Business* for the shared exclusive on how Communication Group client Liberty International was planning to fend off British Land. Fagan and Lorenz correctly forecast the Post Office's £250m loss.

You couldn't make it up. But then they don't have to. Not so long as the "drop" rules.

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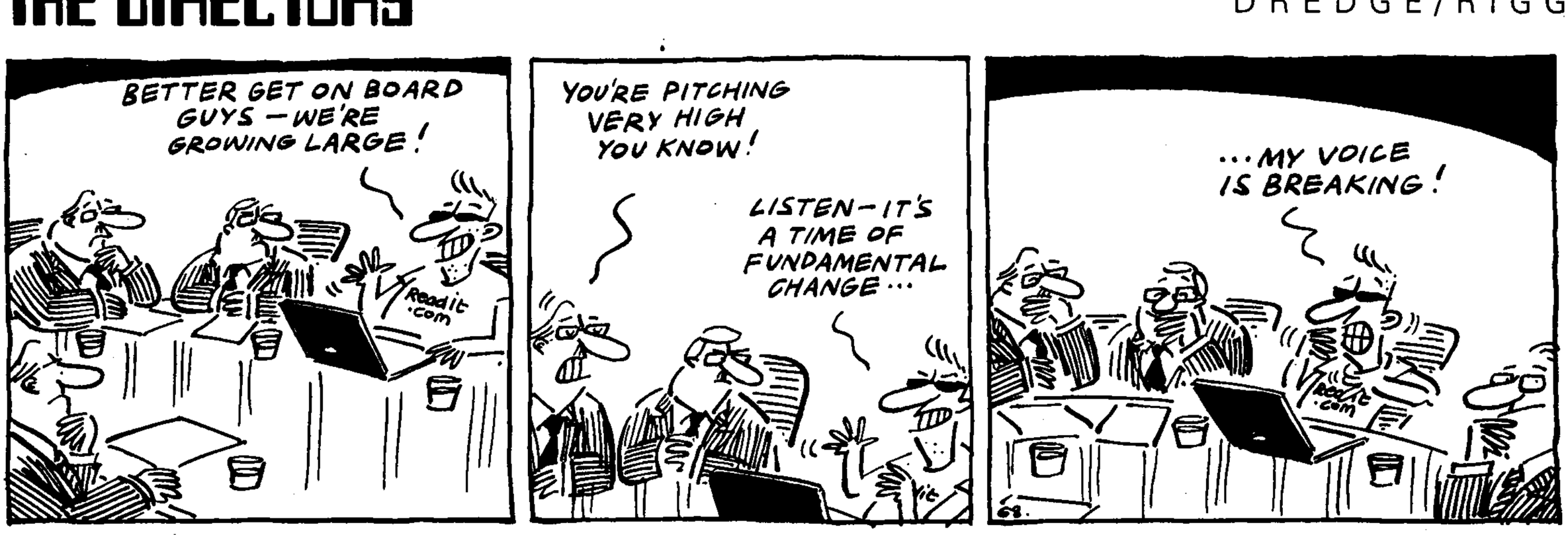
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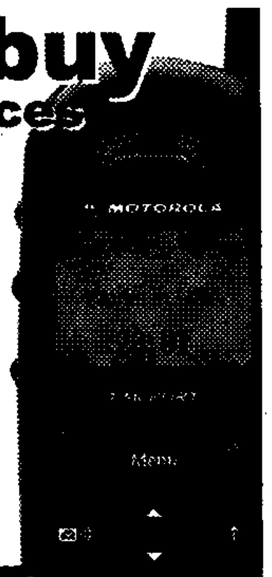

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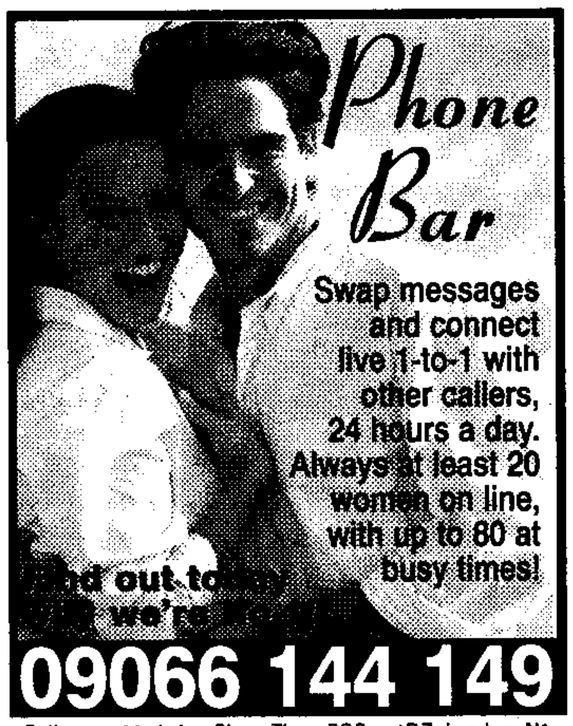
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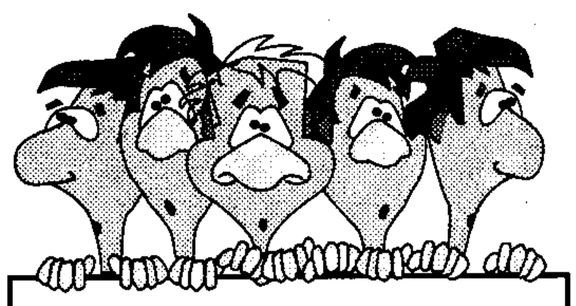

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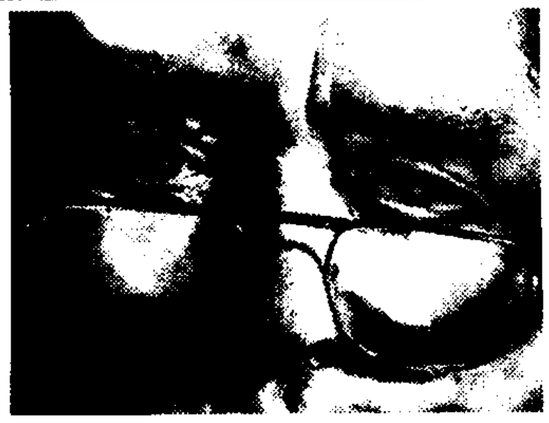

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GENUINE BLIND/ partial deaf person with business acumen seeks funding for business project £40k+. Thank you. A&L 72-58-10, 21802654844.

EYE NEED

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EX-TERRITORIAL now victim of life's disabilities, devastated by debt – would appreciate urgent donations. Barclays 20-25-29, 50142425.

PILOT'S LICENSE – halfway there. Help needed to realise dream. Lloyds 30-97-86, 0652737.

ARTIST SEEKS contemporary art loving patron to support innovative work. Please call 020 8968 2961.

GIFTED CHILD musician and scholar held back by need for extra or private schooling and tuition. All donations to child – you have our word. 40-47-82, 30267635.

GENUINE HEADCASE: Oxford place: MA – October but lacking fees (£2,675). Co-operative 08-93-00, 10415193. Thanks.

63 YEAR OLD, worked hard all life, moderately successful, financially destroyed by divorce. Lost business, home, car, self esteem – requires £15,000 to start again. Lloyds 30-98-22, 0034614. Many, many thanks.

COPPED ROUGH END
of separation.
Forced out of family home.
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Need to establish good base
for kids to visit.
£2000+ would allow new life
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UNSCRUPULOUS GARAGE refuses to return car to Disabled Driver until payment made for unauthorized work and storage. Only quote requested. Please help raise £8,000. Lloyds/TSB 30-99-61, 0062505. Thanks.

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help needed to take children to Rome
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to
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MATURE undergraduate crippled by debts. Any help eternally appreciated. Barclays 20-25-85, 30261718.

DISTRAUGHT over nuisance neighbours. Trapped in social housing. Struggling disabled woman needs a new home. Any help greatly appreciated. Lloyds/TSB 77-49-01, 01247563. Box 0203.

24Y MALAYSIAN female. Accepted by Oxford and Cambridge for Masters, history of science. Desperately needs £14,000 to realise this dream. Thankyou. Box 2605.

DAUGHTER STRANDED abroad. Need funds to help bring her back. Any contribution welcome. Thankyou. Lloyds/TSB 30 25 80, A/C 37070547.

DAMSEL IN DISTRESS facing loss of livelihood, urgently need financial help. Box 2305.

BACK INJURY
PREVENTS WORK
now getting desperate.
Needs funds to pursue legal claim
against insurance giant.
Money repaid if successful.
Please help.
Box 2205.

HONEST, HARDWORKING, sensitive soul, badly wounded and swindled by artful con American husband who cleaned me out – home and all. Desperately need £75,000 to deal with backlash and get back on feet. Please, please can you help with loan or charitable gift. HSB 40-03-05, 81105078 or Box 0105.

TRANSSEXUAL COUPLE the subject of a documentary. Young filmmaker seeks funds to tell extraordinary story. Phone 07957 635035.

RESPECTED archaeology author seeks generous patron to help fund interesting research. E-mail: Peter@centuries.co.uk or Box 0505.

WRITER-PHILOSOPHER needs patronage. Award-winning playwright while undergraduate at Oxford, now writing first novel and beginning postgraduate. Box 3105 or more simply: Lloyds 30-97-71 0483034. Thank you.

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EYE DRINK

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EYE CONTACT

TOWN & COUNTRY Club Directory. A directory service for country minded people wanting to meet others. Farmers, equestrian, horticultural, agricultural, professional people Telephone: 01273 773718 or write to: TOWN & COUNTRY CLUB, Ashfield House, Cross in Hand, East Sussex, TN21 0SR.

PLUMP PARTNERS – National Dating Agency. Plump yourself or happy to meet someone who is? Ring 01352 715909.

RESPECTABLE SINCERE marriage-minded Thai ladies seek genuine like-minded gentlemen. Free colour brochure. T.P.I. SERVICES 01562 748600 (24hrs). www.thai-professional.com

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EYE LOVE

COUNTRY GUY, 40s, fit, active – WLTM 30 year old model-type lady to share smallholding Norfolk/Suffolk border. Into blues, bikes, alternative comedy. Photos exchanged. Box 1405.

INDEPENDENT PROF., tall attractive lady (43) medium build, no children or ties, Middx-based. Enjoys the arts, countryside, dining out and starry skies – seeks similar white n/s gentleman for special friendship. Box 2105.

ATTRACTIVE, SUCCESSFUL, curvy magazine journalist – surprised at being 40 – WLTM easy-going man. A Northern girl at heart but living in London, I am refusing to grow old gracefully. Enjoy wine, travel, lounging around and, er... wine. Intelligence and soh valued over money, flash car etc. Definitely no pretentious poseurs. Box 0405.

CHARMING, GOOD-LOOKING male, 55, divorced, tall, slim and fit professional – seeks beautiful tactile, kind, slim lady for long term fun and good times. Surrey & South East. Photo please. Box 3004.

TALL, DARK MALE, (36), seeks bright warm soulmale (F) to complete the escape West and share life, laughter, good food & wine. Box 3604.

TALL, CULTURED, successful and very generous man, 40, Bath/South West, seeks a younger woman to spoil and pamper and to enjoy the summer with. I live life to the full – film, theatre, travel, eating out and eating in, laughter and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with a man who really enjoys himself – then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 2805.

HANDSOME (TOLD), 36, tall, successful male with great sense of humour and fun – seeks discreet liaison with attached or career lady. Let's put a bit of spark into life. Total discretion assured. S.W. LONDON. gla99@dial.pipex.com. or Box 2405.

GIRL TRAPPED in gorgeous woman's body for 39 years seeks release with adventurous open-minded male. Box 2705.

ENERGETIC, CARING, erudite, hearing impaired, inexperienced male 49 – seeks understanding and responsible teacher. Box 2505.

SLIM, PETITE female sought, 30/40 – for pampering, affection, fun, laughter. Photo essential. Kent/Surrey. Box 0805.

CRICKET FAN (42, Midlands) would like to bowl a maiden over – and be bowled over. No sledgers or match-fixers. Box 2005.

HANDSOME vasectomised academic, late 30s, available for regular supervision of sympathetic under-graduette, Cambridge area. Box 1305.

DIVINE Nubian princess, 34, wltm cosmopolitan gentleman 46-48 who craves confidante companion for LTR. Photo and phone guarantees reply. London Box 3205.

MARRIED, ELEGANT female, 42, 5'7", sophisticated, cultured, kind, sensitive, with good sense of humour – wishes to meet male 43-53 ditto for discreet, quality relationship. LONDON / WARWICKSHIRE. Box 1505.

STRONG, CONFIDENT female, to adore and serve, sought by well heeled, willing, good looking male, 40s. Box 0605.

STYLISH BRUNETTE, 31, seeks exceptional man, London based. Please send photo. Box 0305.

FEELING NEGLECTED? Would you like more passion in your life? Me too! Nice, normal man, 39, NS, GSOH, WLTM similar woman who may be interested in an occasional tryst. Box 3305.

BEAUTIFUL, strong willed female, 29, seeks gentleman, age unimportant, of opposite nature, for erotic liaison. Box 1105.

HANDSOME masterful entrepreneur,

GENTLEMAN
seeks maiden
TO COURT AND CHERISH.
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seeks like female
to enjoy life to the full again.
Discretion assured.
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GIRLFRIEND REQUESTED: boyish airline pilot, articulate and privately educated - seeks slender well spoken woman for occasional companionship. Box 1805.

WARM, SENSITIVE, articulate male, active young sixties, open marriage, GSOH – enjoys arts, walking, talking, good food/wine – seeks sensual woman friend/lover for worthwhile relationship. South London. Box 1205.

OFFBEAT WOMAN, sensuous, sunny, creative, independent, N/S, un-accountably single and still laughing at 50s, would WLTM sensitive, fit, tall, solvent man interested in contemporary arts and laughter. Box 0705.

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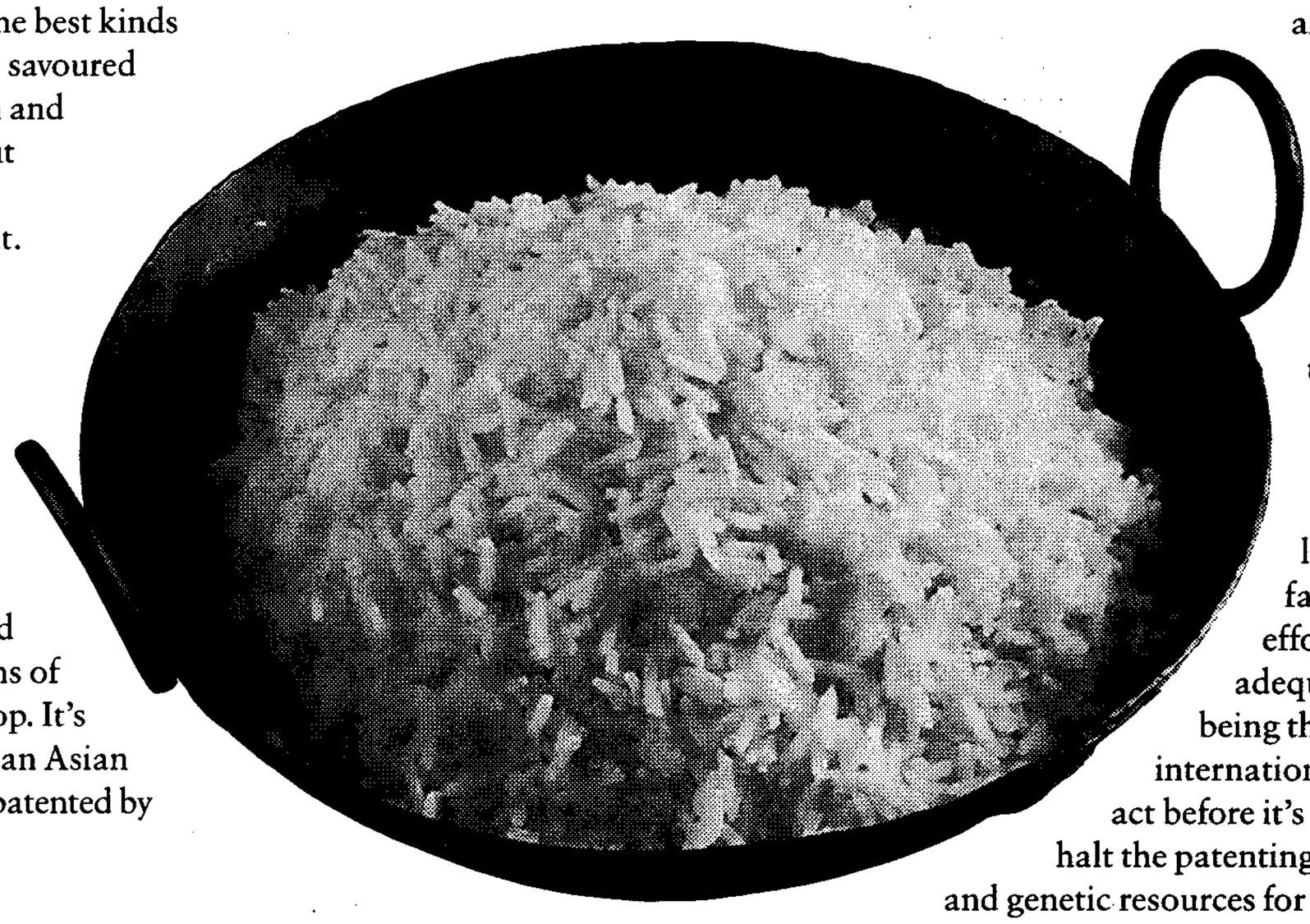

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Basmati is one of the best kinds of rice you can buy, savoured for its slender grain and distinctive taste. But Basmati, an Asian crop, is under threat. A Texas-based company, RiceTec Inc., now owns a patent on Basmati rice in the US – their 'Basmati' is derived from crops that have taken farmers in India and Pakistan generations of hard work to develop. It's disturbing to think an Asian crop has now been patented by a US company.

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